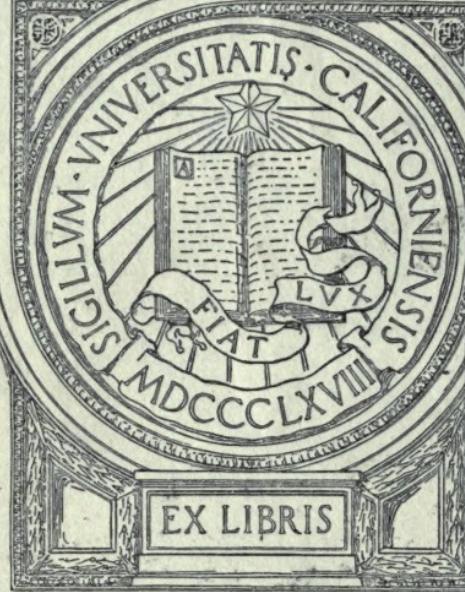


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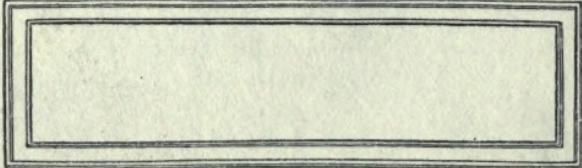


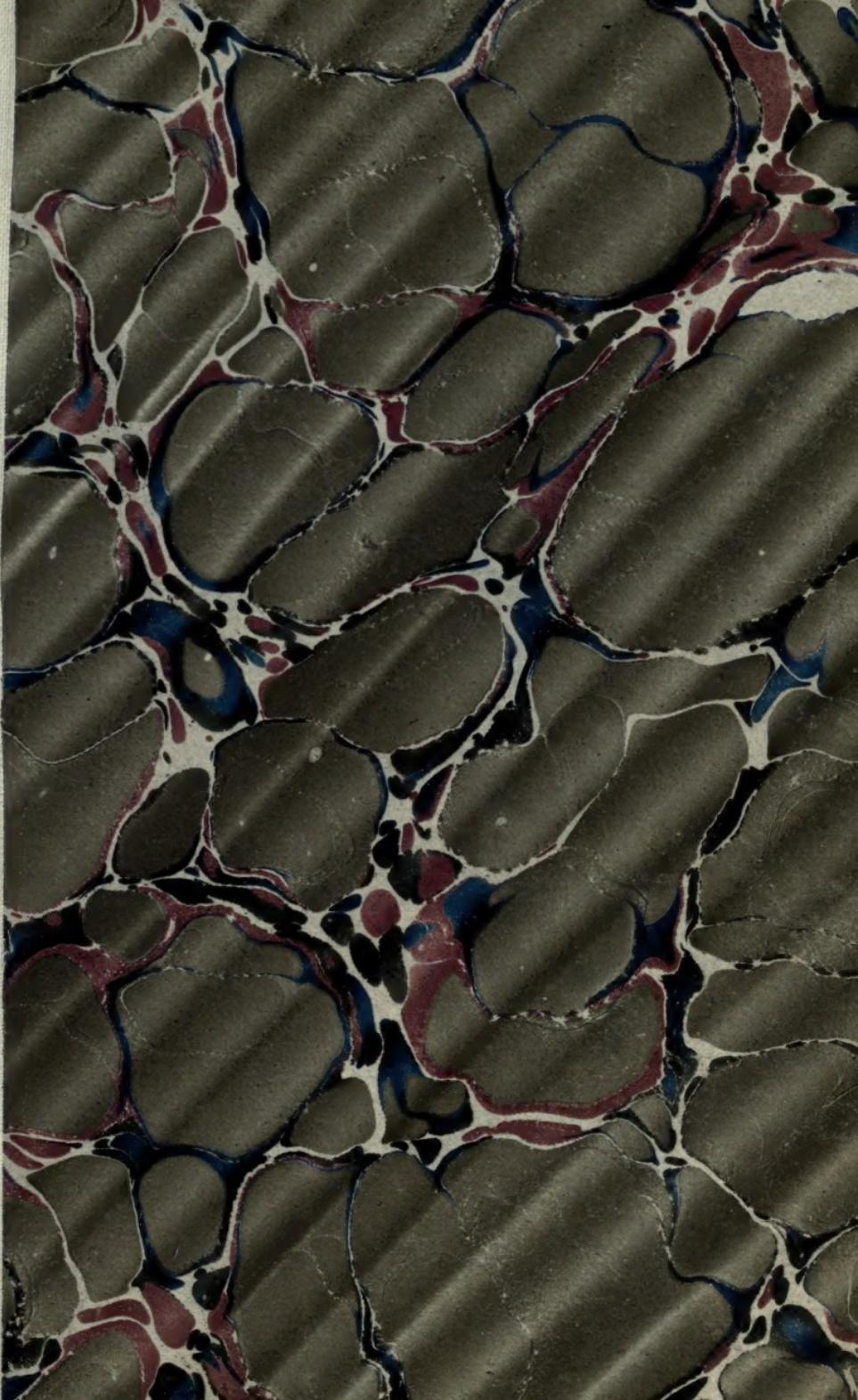
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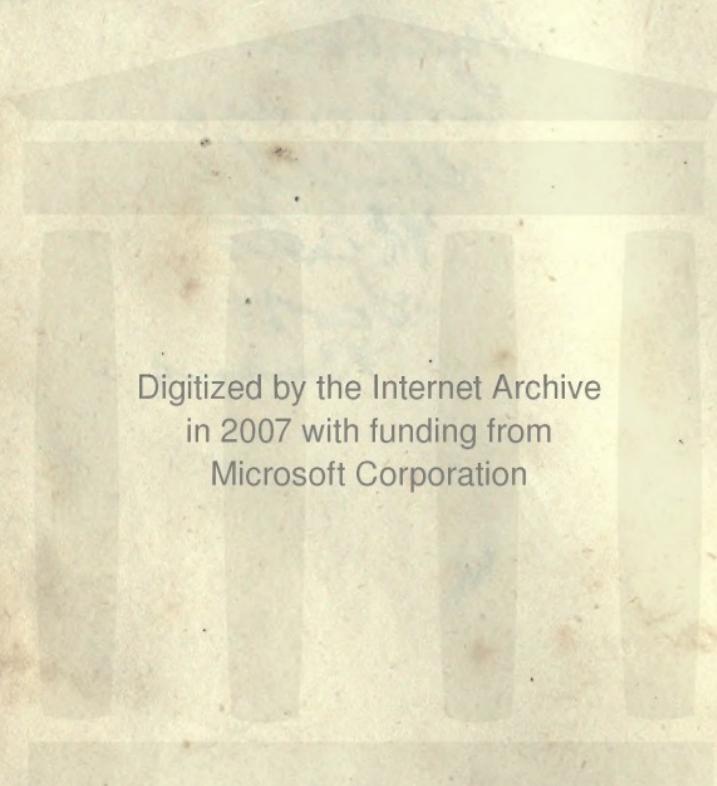
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ARTHUR HUNTER.

NEW YORK
ALICE M. TAYLOR, 161 BROADWAY



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IMAGINATION AND FANCY;

OR

SELECTIONS FROM THE ENGLISH POETS,

Illustrative of those First Requisites of their Art;

WITH MARKINGS OF THE BEST PASSAGES, CRITICAL NOTICES
OF THE WRITERS,

AND AN ESSAY IN ANSWER TO THE QUESTION

"WHAT IS POETRY?"

BY

LEIGH HUNT.

NEW YORK:
WILEY AND PUTNAM, 161 BROADWAY.

1845.

Life & Estate of

Caroline E. DeLoach

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P R E F A C E.

THIS book is intended for all lovers of poetry and the sister arts, but more especially for those of the most poetical sort, and most especially for the youngest and the oldest: for as the former may incline to it for information's sake, the latter will perhaps not refuse it their good-will for the sake of old favorites. The Editor has often wished for such a book himself; and as nobody will make it for him, he has made it for others.

It was suggested by the approbation which the readers of a periodical work bestowed on some extracts from the poets, *commented, and marked with italics, on a principle of co-perusal*, as though the Editor were reading the passages in their company. Those readers wished to have more such extracts; and here, if they are still in the mind, they now possess them. The remarks on one of the poems that formed a portion of the extracts (the Eve of Saint Agnes), are repeated in the present volume. All the rest of the matter contributed by him is new. He does not expect, of course, that every reader will agree with the preferences of particular lines or passages, intimated by the italics. Some will think them too numerous; some perhaps too few; many who chance to take up the book, may wish there had been none at all; but these will have

the goodness to recollect what has just been stated,—that the plan was suggested by others who desired them. The Editor, at any rate, begs to be considered as having marked the passages in no spirit of dictation to any one, much less of disparagement to all the admirable passages not marked. If he assumed anything at all (beyond what is implied in the fact of imparting experience), it was the probable mutual pleasure of the reader, his companion; just as in reading out-loud, one instinctively increases one's emphasis here and there, and implies a certain accordance of enjoyment on the part of the hearers. In short, all poetic readers are expected to have a more than ordinary portion of sympathy, especially with those who take pains to please them; and the Editor desires no larger amount of it, than he gratefully gives to any friend who is good enough to read out similar passages to himself.

The object of the book is threefold;—to present the public with some of the finest passages in English poetry, *so marked and commented*;—to furnish such an account, in an Essay, of the nature and requirements of poetry, *as may enable readers in general to give an answer on those points to themselves and others*;—and to show, throughout the greater part of the volume, what sort of poetry is to be considered *as poetry of the most poetical kind*, or such as exhibits the imagination and fancy in a state of predominance, undisputed by interests of another sort. Poetry, therefore, is not here in its *compound* state, great or otherwise (except incidentally in the Essay), but in its element, like an essence distilled. All the greatest poetry includes that essence, but the essence does not present itself in exclusive combination with the greatest *form* of poetry. It varies in that respect from the most tremendous to the

most playful effusions, and from imagination to fancy through all their degrees;—from Homer and Dante, to Coleridge and Keats;—from Shakspeare in King Lear, to Shakspeare himself in the Midsummer Night's Dream; from Spenser's Faerie Queene, to the Castle of Indolence; nay, from Ariel in the Tempest, to his somewhat presumptuous namesake in the Rape of the Lock. And passages, both from Thomson's delightful allegory, and Pope's paragon of mock-heroics, would have been found in this volume, but for that intentional, artificial imitation, even in the former, which removes them at too great a distance from the highest sources of inspiration.

With the great poet of the Faerie Queene the Editor has taken special pains to make readers in general better acquainted; and in furtherance of this purpose he has exhibited many of his best passages in remarkable relation to the art of the Painter.

For obvious reasons no living writer is included; and some, lately deceased, do not come within the plan. The omission will not be thought invidious in an Editor, who has said more of his contemporaries than most men; and who would gladly give specimens of the latter poets in future volumes.

One of the objects indeed of this preface is to state, that should the Public evince a willingness to have more such books, the Editor would propose to give them, in succession, corresponding volumes of the Poetry of Action and Passion (Narrative and Dramatic Poetry), from Chaucer to Campbell (here mentioned because he is the latest deceased poet); the Poetry of Contemplation, from Surrey to Campbell;—the Poetry of Wit and Humor, from Chaucer to Byron; and the Poetry of Song, or Lyrical Poetry,

from Chaucer again (see in his Works his admirable and only song, beginning

Hide, Absalom, thy gilded tresses clear),

to Campbell again, and Burns, and O'Keefe. These volumes, if he is not mistaken, would present the Public with the *only selection*, hitherto made, *of none but genuine poetry*; and he would take care, that it should be unobjectionable in every other respect.*

KENSINGTON, Sept. 10, 1844.

* While closing the Essay on Poetry, a friend lent me Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*, which I had not seen for many years, and which I mention, partly to notice a coincidence at page 31 of the Essay, not otherwise worth observation; and partly to do what I can towards extending the acquaintance of the public with a book containing masterly expositions of the art of poetry.

AN ANSWER TO THE QUESTION

WHAT IS POETRY?

INCLUDING

REMARKS ON VERSIFICATION.

POETRY, strictly and artistically so called, that is to say, considered not merely as poetic feeling, which is more or less shared by all the world, but as the operation of that feeling, such as we see it in the poet's book, is the utterance of a passion for truth, beauty and power, embodying and illustrating its conceptions by imagination and fancy, and modulating its language on the principle of variety in uniformity. Its means are whatever the universe contains ; and its ends, pleasure and exaltation. Poetry stands between nature and convention, keeping alive among us the enjoyment of the external and spiritual world : it has constituted the most enduring fame of nations ; and, next to Love and Beauty, which are its parents, is the greatest proof to man of the pleasure to be found in all things, and of the probable riches of infinitude.

Poetry is a passion,* because it seeks the deepest impressions ; and because it must undergo, in order to convey them.

It is a passion for truth, because without truth the impression would be false or defective.

It is a passion for beauty, because its office is to exalt and refine by means of pleasure, and because beauty is nothing but the loveliest form of pleasure.

* *Passio*, suffering in a good sense,—ardent subjection of one's self to emotion

It is a passion for power, because power is impression triumphant, whether over the poet, as desired by himself, or over the reader, as affected by the poet.

It embodies and illustrates its impressions by imagination, or images of the objects of which it treats, and other images brought in to throw light on those objects, in order that it may enjoy and impart the feeling of their truth in its utmost conviction and affluence.

It illustrates them by fancy, which is a lighter play of imagination, or the feeling of analogy coming short of seriousness, in order that it may laugh with what it loves, and show how it can decorate it with fairy ornament.

It modulates what it utters, because in running the whole round of beauty it must needs include beauty of sound ; and because, in the height of its enjoyment, it must show the perfection of its triumph, and make difficulty itself become part of its facility and joy.

And lastly, Poetry shapes this modulation into uniformity for its outline, and variety for its parts, because it thus realizes the last idea of beauty itself, which includes the charm of diversity within the flowing round of habit and ease.

Poetry is imaginative passion. The quickest and subtlest test of the possession of its essence is in expression ; the variety of things to be expressed shows the amount of its resources ; and the continuity of the song completes the evidence of its strength and greatness. He who has thought, feeling, expression, imagination, action, character, and continuity, all in the largest amount and highest degree, is the greatest poet.

Poetry includes whatsoever of painting can be made visible to the mind's eye, and whatsoever of music can be conveyed by sound and proportion without singing or instrumentation. But it far surpasses those divine arts in suggestiveness, range, and intellectual wealth ;—the first, in expression of thought, combination of images, and the triumph over space and time ; the second, in all that can be done by speech, apart from the tones and modulations of pure sound. Painting and music, however, include all those portions of the gift of poetry that can be expressed and heightened by the visible and melodious. Painting,

in a certain apparent manner, is things themselves ; music, in a certain audible manner, is their very emotion and grace. Music and painting are proud to be related to poetry, and poetry loves and is proud of them.

Poetry begins where matter of fact or of science ceases to be merely such, and to exhibit a further truth ; that is to say, the connexion it has with the world of emotion, and its power to produce imaginative pleasure. Inquiring of a gardener, for instance, what flower it is that we see yonder, he answers, "a lily." This is matter of fact. The botanist pronounces it to be of the order of "Hexandria Monogynia." This is matter of science. It is the "lady" of the garden, says Spenser ; and here we begin to have a poetical sense of its fairness and grace. It is

The plant and flower of *light*,

says Ben Jonson ; and poetry then shows us the beauty of the flower in all its mystery and splendor.

If it be asked, how we know perceptions like these to be true, the answer is, by the fact of their existence,—by the consent and delight of poetic readers. And as feeling is the earliest teacher, and perception the only final proof, of things the most demonstrable by science, so the remotest imaginations of the poets may often be found to have the closest connexion with matter of fact ; perhaps might always be so, if the subtlety of our perceptions were a match for the causes of them. Consider this image of Ben Jonson's—of a lily being a flower of light. Light, undecomposed, is white ; and as the lily is white, and light is white, and whiteness itself is nothing *but* light, the two things, so far, are not merely similar, but identical. A poet might add, by an analogy drawn from the connexion of light and color, and there is a "golden dawn" issuing out of the white lily, in the rich yellow of the stamens. I have no desire to push this similarity further than it may be worth. Enough has been stated to show that, in poetical as in other analogies, "the same feet of Nature," as Bacon says, may be seen "treading in different paths ;" and that the most scornful, that is to say,

dullest disciple of fact, should be cautious how he betrays the shallowness of his philosophy by discerning no poetry in its depths.

But the poet is far from dealing only with these subtle and analogical truths. Truth of every kind belongs to him, provided it can bud into any kind of beauty, or is capable of being illustrated and impressed by the poetic faculty. Nay, the simplest truth is often so beautiful and impressive of itself, that one of the greatest proofs of his genius consists in his leaving it to stand alone, illustrated by nothing but the light of its own tears or smiles, its own wonder, might, or playfulness. Hence the complete effect of many a simple passage in our old English ballads and romances, and of the passionate sincerity in general of the greatest early poets, such as Homer and Chaucer, who flourished before the existence of a "literary world," and were not perplexed by a heap of notions and opinions, or by doubts how emotion ought to be expressed. The greatest of their successors never write equally to the purpose, except when they can dismiss everything from their minds but the like simple truth. In the beautiful poem of "Sir Eger, Sir Graham, and Sir Gray-Steel" (see it in Ellis's Specimens, or Laing's Early Metrical Tales), a knight thinks himself disgraced in the eyes of his mistress :

Sir Eger said, "If it be so,
Then wot I well I must forego
Love-loving, and manhood, all clean!"
The water rushed out of his een!

Sir Gray-Steel is killed :—

Gray-Steel into his death thus throws (throes?)
He *walters* (welters—throws himself about) *and the*
grass up draws;

* * * * *
A little while then lay he still
(Friends that him saw, liked full ill)
And bled into his armor bright.

The abode of Chaucer's *Reve*, or Steward, in the Canterbury Tales, is painted in two lines, which nobody ever wished longer :—

His wonning (dwelling) was full fair upon an heath,
With greeny trees yshadowed was his place.

Every one knows the words of Lear, “most *matter-of-fact*, most melancholy.”

Pray do not mock me ;
I am a very foolish fond old man
Fourscore and upwards :
Not an hour more, nor less ; and to deal plainly
I fear I am not in my perfect mind.

It is thus, by exquisite pertinence, melody, and the implied power of writing with exuberance, if need be, that beauty and truth become identical in poetry, and that pleasure, or at the very worst, a balm in our tears, is drawn out of pain.

It is a great and rare thing, and shows a lovely imagination, when the poet can write a commentary, as it were, of his own, on such sufficing passages of nature, and be thanked for the addition. There is an instance of this kind in Warner, an old Elizabethan poet, than which I know nothing sweeter in the world. He is speaking of Fair Rosamond, and of a blow given her by Queen Eleanor.

With that she dash'd her on the lips,
So dyèd double red :
Hard was the heart that gave the blow,
Soft were those lips that bled.

There are different kinds and degrees of imagination, some of them necessary to the formation of every true poet, and all of them possessed by the greatest. Perhaps they may be enumerated as follows:—First, that which presents to the mind any object or circumstance in every-day life ; as when we imagine a man holding a sword, or looking out of a window ;—Second, that which presents real, but not every-day circumstances ; as King Alfred tending the loaves, or Sir Philip Sidney giving up the water to the dying soldier ;—Third, that which combines character and events directly imitated from real life, with imitative realities of its own invention ; as the probable parts of the histories of Priam and Macbeth, or what may be called natural

fiction as distinguished from supernatural ;—Fourth, that which conjures up things and events not to be found in nature ; as Homer's gods, and Shakspeare's witches, enchanted horses and spears, Ariosto's hippocriff, &c. ;—Fifth, that which, in order to illustrate or aggravate one image, introduces another ; sometimes in simile, as when Homer compares Apollo descending in his wrath at noon-day to the coming of night-time : sometimes in metaphor, or simile comprised in a word, as in Milton's “motes that *people* the sunbeams ;” sometimes in concentrating into a word the main history of any person or thing, past or even future, as in the “starry Galileo” of Byron, and that ghastly foregone conclusion of the epithet “murdered” applied to the yet living victim in Keats's story from Boccaccio—

So the two brothers and their *murder'd* man
Rode towards fair Florence ;—

sometimes in the attribution of a certain representative quality which makes one circumstance stand for others ; as in Milton's grey-fly winding its “*sultry* horn,” which epithet contains the heat of a summer's day ;—Sixth, that which reverses this process, and makes a variety of circumstances take color from one, like nature seen with jaundiced or glad eyes, or under the influence of storm or sunshine ; as when in Lycidas, or the Greek pastoral poets, the flowers and the flocks are made to sympathize with a man's death ; or, in the Italian poet, the river flowing by the sleeping Angelica seems talking of love—

Parea che l' erba le fiorisse intorno,
E d' amor ragionasse quella riva !—

Orlando Innamorato, Canto iii.

or in the voluptuous homage paid to the sleeping Imogen by the very light in the chamber and the reaction of her own beauty upon itself ; or in the “witch element” of the tragedy of Macbeth and the May-day night of Faust ;—Seventh, and last, that which by a single expression, apparently of the vaguest kind, not only meets but surpasses in its effect the extremest force of the most particular description ; as in that exquisite passage of

Coleridge's Christabel, where the unsuspecting object of the witch's malignity is bidden to go to bed :—

Quoth Christabel, So let it be !
And as the lady bade, did she.
Her gentle limbs did she undress,
And lay down in her loveliness ;—

a perfect verse surely, both for feeling and music. The very smoothness and gentleness of the limbs is in the series of the letter *l's*.

I am aware of nothing of the kind surpassing the most lovely inclusion of physical beauty in moral, neither can I call to mind any instances of the imagination that turns accompaniments into accessories, superior to those I have alluded to. Of the class of comparison, one of the most touching (many a tear must it have drawn from parents and lovers) is in a stanza which has been copied into the "Friar of Orders Grey," out of Beaumont and Fletcher :—

Weep no more, lady, weep no more,
Thy sorrow is in vain ;
For violets pluck'd the sweetest showers
Will ne'er make grow again.

And Shakspeare and Milton abound in the very grandest ; such as Antony's likening his changing fortunes to the cloud-rack ; Lear's appeal to the old age of the heavens ; Satan's appearance in the horizon, like a fleet "hanging in the clouds ;" and the comparisons of him with the comet and the eclipse. Nor unworthy of this glorious company, for its extraordinary combination of delicacy and vastness, is that enchanting one of Shelley's in the Adonais :—

Life, like a dome of many-colored glass,
Stains the white radiance of eternity.

I multiply these particulars in order to impress upon the reader's mind the great importance of imagination in all its phases, as a constituent part of the highest poetic faculty.

The happiest instance I remember of imaginative metaphor

is Shakspeare's moonlight "sleeping" on a bank ; but half his poetry may be said to be made up of it, metaphor indeed being the common coin of discourse. Of imaginary creatures, none out of the pale of mythology and the East, are equal, perhaps, in point of invention, to Shakspeare's Ariel and Caliban ; though poetry may grudge to prose the discovery of a Winged Woman, especially such as she has been described by her inventor in the story of Peter Wilkins ; and in point of treatment, the Mammon and Jealousy of Spenser, some of the monsters in Dante, particularly his Nimrod, his interchangements of creatures into one another, and (if I am not presumptuous in anticipating what I think will be the verdict of posterity) the Witch in Coleridge's Christabel, may rank even with the creations of Shakspeare. It may be doubted, indeed, whether Shakspeare had bile and nightmare enough in him to have thought of such detestable horrors as those of the interchanging adversaries (now serpent, now man), or even of the huge, half-blockish enormity of Nimrod,—in Scripture, the "mighty hunter" and builder of the tower of Babel,—in Dante, a tower of a man in his own person, standing with some of his brother giants up to the middle in a pit in hell, blowing a horn to which a thunder-clap is a whisper, and hallooing after Dante and his guide in the jargon of the lost tongue ! The transformations are too odious to quote : but of the towering giant we cannot refuse ourselves the "fearful joy" of a specimen. It was twilight, Dante tells us, and he and his guide Virgil were silently pacing through one of the dreariest regions of hell, when the sound of a tremendous horn made him turn all his attention to the spot from which it came. He there discovered through the dusk, what seemed to be the towers of a city. Those are no towers, said his guide ; they are giants, standing up to the middle in one of these circular pits.

Come quando la nippa si dissipa,
Lo sguardo a poco a poco raffigura
Ciò che cela l' vapor che l' aere stipa;
Così forando l' aer grossa e scura
Più e più appressando in ver la sponda,
Fuggémi errore, e giugnemi paura:
Perocchè come in su la cerchia tonda

Montereggion di torri si corona,
 Così la proda che 'l pozzo circonda
 Torreggiavan di mezza la persona
 Gli orribili giganti, cui minaccia
 Giove del cielo ancora, quando tuona :
 Ed io scorgeva già' d'alcun la faccia,
 Le spalle e 'l petto, e del ventre gran parte,
 E per le coste giù ambo le braccia.

* * * * *

La faccia sua mi parea lunga e grossa
 Come la pina di san Pietro a Roma :
 E a sua proporzion eran l'altr' ossa.

Rafel mai amech zabì almi
 Cominciò a gridar la fiera bocca,
 Cui non si convenien più dolci salmi.
 E 'l duca mio ver lui : anima sciocca,
 Tienti col corno, e con quel ti disfoga,
 Quand' ira o altra passion ti tocca.
 Cercati al collo, e troverai la soga
 Che 'l tien legato, o anima confusa,
 E vedi lui che 'l gran petto ti doga.
 Poi disse a me : egli stesso s' accusa :
 Questi è Nembrotto, per lo cui mal coto
 Pure un linguaggio nel mondo non s' usa.
 Lasciamlo stare, e non parliamo a voto :
 Che così è a lui ciascun linguaggio,
 Come 'l suo ad altrui ch' a nullo è noto.

Inferno, Canto xxxi., ver. 34.

I look'd again ; and as the eye makes out,
 By little and little, what the mist conceal'd
 In which, till clearing up, the sky was steep'd ;
 So, looming through the gross and darksome air,
 As we drew nigh, those mighty bulks grew plain,
 And error quitted me, and terror join'd :
 For in like manner as all round its height
 Montereggione crowns itself with towers,
 So tower'd above the circuit of that pit,
 Though but half out of it, and half within,
 The horrible giants that fought Jove, and still
 Are threaten'd when he thunders. As we near'd
 The foremost, I discern'd his mighty face,
 His shoulders, breast, and more than half his trunk,
 With both the arms down hanging by the sides.
 His face appear'd to me, in length and breadth,

Huge as St. Peter's pinnacle at Rome,
And of a like proportion all his bones.
He open'd, as he went, his dreadful mouth,
Fit for no sweeter psalmody ; and shouted
After us, in the words of some strange tongue,
Râfel ma-èe amech zabèe almee !—
“ Dull wretch !” my leader cried, “ keep to thine horn,
And so vent better whatsoever rage
Or other passion stuff thee. Feel thy throat
And find the chain upon thee, thou confusion !
Lo ! what a hoop is clench'd about thy gorge.”
Then turning to myself, he said, “ His howl
Is its own mockery. This is Nimrod, he
Through whose ill thought it was that humankind
Were tongue-confounded. Pass him, and say naught:
For as he speaketh language known of none,
So none can speak save jargon to himself.”

Assuredly it could not have been easy to find a fiction so uncouthly terrible as this in the hypochondria of Hamlet. Even his father had evidently seen no such ghost in the other world. All his phantoms were in the world he had left. Timon, Lear, Richard, Brutus, Prospero, Macbeth himself, none of Shakspeare's men had, in fact, any thought but of the earth they lived on, whatever supernatural fancy crossed them. The thing fancied was still a thing of this world, “ in its habit as it lived,” or no remoter acquaintance than a witch or a fairy. Its lowest depths (unless Dante suggested them) were the cellars under the stage. Caliban himself is a cross-breed between a witch and a clown. No offence to Shakspeare ; who was not bound to be the greatest of healthy poets, and to have every morbid inspiration besides. What he might have done, had he set his wits to compete with Dante, I know not : all I know is, that in the infernal line he did nothing like him ; and it is not to be wished he had. It is far better that, as a higher, more universal, and more beneficent variety of the genus Poet, he should have been the happier man he was, and left us the plump cheeks on his monument, instead of the carking visage of the great, but over-serious, and comparatively one-sided Florentine. Even the imagination of Spenser, whom we take to have been a “ nervous gentleman ” compared with Shakspeare, was visited

with no such dreams as Dante. Or, if it was, he did not choose to make himself thinner (as Dante says *he* did) with dwelling upon them. He had twenty visions of nymphs and bowers, to one of the mud of Tartarus. Chaucer, for all he was "a man of this world" as well as the poets' world, and as great, perhaps a greater enemy of oppression than Dante, besides being one of the profoundest masters of pathos that ever lived, had not the heart to conclude the story of the famished father and his children, as finished by the inexorable anti-Pisan. But enough of Dante in this place. Hobbes, in order to daunt the reader from objecting to his friend Davenant's want of invention, says of these fabulous creations in general, in his letter prefixed to the poem of Gondibert, that "impenetrable armors, enchanted castles, invulnerable bodies, iron men, flying horses, and a thousand other such things, are easily feigned by them that dare." These are girds at Spenser and Ariosto. But, with leave of Hobbes (who translated Homer as if on purpose to show what execrable verses could be written by a philosopher), enchanted castles and flying horses are not easily feigned, as Ariosto and Spenser feigned them; and that just makes all the difference. For proof, see the accounts of Spenser's enchanted castle in Book the Third, Canto Twelfth, of the Fairy Queen; and let the reader of Italian open the Orlando Furioso at its first introduction of the Hippogriff (Canto iii., st. 4), where Bradamante, coming to an inn, hears a great noise, and sees all the people looking up at something in the air; upon which, looking up herself, she sees a knight in shining armor riding towards the sunset upon a creature with variegated wings, and then dipping and disappearing among the hills. Chaucer's steed of brass, that was

So horsly and so quick of eye,

is copied from the life. You might pat him and feel his brazen muscles. Hobbes, in objecting to what he thought childish, made a childish mistake. His criticism is just such as a boy might pique himself upon, who was educated on mechanical principles, and thought he had outgrown his Goody Two-shoes.

With a wonderful dimness of discernment in poetic matters, considering his acuteness in others, he fancies he has settled the question by pronouncing such creations "impossible!" To the brazier they are impossible, no doubt; but not to the poet. Their possibility, if the poet wills it, is to be conceded; the problem is, the creature being given, how to square its actions with probability, according to the nature assumed of it. Hobbes did not see, that the skill and beauty of these fictions lay in bringing them within those very regions of truth and likelihood in which he thought they could not exist. Hence the serpent Python of Chaucer,

Sleeping against the sun upon a day,

when Apollo slew him. Hence the chariot-drawing dolphins of Spenser, softly swimming along the shore lest they should hurt themselves against the stones and gravel. Hence Shakspeare's Ariel, living under blossoms, and riding at evening on the bat; and his domestic namesake in the "Rape of the Lock" (the imagination of the drawing-room) saving a lady's petticoat from the coffee with his plumes, and directing atoms of snuff into a coxcomb's nose. In the "Orlando Furioso" (Canto xv., st. 65) is a wild story of a cannibal necromancer, who laughs at being cut to pieces, coming together again like quicksilver, and picking up his head when it is cut off, sometimes by the hair, sometimes by the nose! This, which would be purely childish and ridiculous in the hands of an inferior poet, becomes interesting, nay grand, in Ariosto's, from the beauties of his style, and its conditional truth to nature. The monster has a fated hair on his head,—a single hair,—which must be taken from it before he can be killed. Decapitation itself is of no consequence, without that proviso. The Paladin Astolfo, who has fought this phenomenon on horseback, and succeeded in getting the head and galloping off with it, is therefore still at a loss what to be at. How is he to discover such a needle in such a bottle of hay? The trunk is spurring after him to recover it, and he seeks for some evidence of the hair in vain. At length he be-thinks himself of scalping the head. He does so; and the mo-

ment the operation arrives at the place of the hair, *the face of the head becomes pale, the eyes turn in their sockets*, and the lifeless pursuer tumbles from his horse.

Si fece il viso allor pallido e brutto,
 Travolse gli occhi, e dimostrò a 'l occaso
 Per manifesti segni esser condutto.
 E 'l busto che seguia troncato al collo,
 Di sella cadde, e diè l' ultimo crollo

Then grew the visage pale, and deadly-wet ;
 The eyes turned in their sockets, drearily ;
 And all things show'd the villain's sun was set.
 His trunk that was in chase, fell from its horse,
 And giving the last shudder, was a corse.

It is thus, and thus only, by making Nature his companion wherever he goes, even in the most supernatural region, that the poet, in the words of a very instructive phrase, takes the world along with him. It is true, he must not (as the Platonists would say) humanize weakly or mistakenly in that region ; otherwise he runs the chance of forgetting to be true to the supernatural itself, and so betraying a want of imagination from that quarter. His nymphs will have no taste of their woods and waters ; his gods and goddesses be only so many fair or frowning ladies and gentlemen, such as we see in ordinary paintings ; he will be in no danger of having his angels likened to a sort of wild-fowl, as Rembrandt has made them in his Jacob's Dream. His Bacchus's will never remind us, like Titian's, of the force and fury, as well as of the graces, of wine. His Jupiter will reduce no females to ashes ; his fairies be nothing fantastical ; his gnomes not "of the earth, earthy." And this again will be wanting to Nature ; for it will be wanting to the supernatural, as Nature would have made it, working in a supernatural direction. Nevertheless, the poet, even for imagination's sake, must not become a bigot to imaginative truth, dragging it down into the region of the mechanical and the limited, and losing sight of its paramount privilege, which is to make beauty, in a human sense, the lady and queen of the universe. He would gain nothing by making his ocean-nymphs mere fishy creatures, upon

the plea that such only could live in the water: his wood-nymphs with faces of knotted oak; his angels without breath and song, because no lungs could exist between the earth's atmosphere and the empyrean. The Grecian tendency in this respect is safer than the Gothic; nay, more imaginative; for it enables us to imagine *beyond* imagination, and to bring all things healthily round to their only present final ground of sympathy—the human. When we go to heaven, we may idealize in a superhuman mode, and have altogether different notions of the beautiful; but till then, we must be content with the loveliest capabilities of earth. The sea-nymphs of Greece were still beautiful women, though they lived in the water. The gills and fins of the ocean's natural inhabitants were confined to their lowest semi-human attendants; or if Triton himself was not quite human, it was because he represented the fiercer part of the vitality of the seas, as they did the fairer.

To conclude this part of my subject, I will quote from the greatest of all narrative writers two passages;—one exemplifying the imagination which brings supernatural things to bear on earthly, without confounding them; the other, that which paints events and circumstances after real life. The first is where Achilles, who has long absented himself from the conflict between his countrymen and the Trojans, has had a message from heaven, bidding him re-appear in the enemy's sight, standing outside the camp-wall upon the trench, but doing nothing more; that is to say, taking no part in the fight. He is simply to be seen. The two armies down by the sea-side are contending which shall possess the body of Patroclus; and the mere sight of the dreadful Grecian chief—supernaturally indeed impressed upon them, in order that nothing may be wanting to the full effect of his courage and conduct upon courageous men—is to determine the question. We are to imagine a slope of ground towards the sea, in order to elevate the trench; the camp is solitary; the battle (“a dreadful roar of men,” as Homer calls it) is raging on the sea-shore; and the goddess Iris has just delivered her message, and disappeared.

**Αυταρ Αχιλλευς ωρτο Δαι φιλος αμφι δ' Αθηνη
Ωμοις εφθιμοισι βαλ' αιγιδα θυσσανοεσσαν**

Αμφὶ δὲ δι κεφαλὴ νεφος εστεφε δια θεων
 Χρυσεον, εκ δ' αυτου δαι φλογα παμφανοσαν.
 'Ως δ' ὅτε καπνος ιων εξ αστεος αιθερ' ἵκηται
 Τηλοθεν εκ νησου, την δηιοι αμφιμαχονται,
 'Οιτε πανημεριοι στυγερω κρινονται Αρηι
 Αστεος εκ σφετερον' ἀμα δ' ηδιω καταδυντι
 Πυρσοι τε φλεγεθουσιν επητριμοι, ύψοσε δ' ανγη
 Γιγνεται αισσυνσα, περικτιονεσσιν ιδεσθαι,
 Αι κεν πως συν νησιν αρης αλκτηρες ἵκωνται.
 'Ως απ' Αχιλλης κεφαλης σελας αιθερ' ἵκανεν.

Στη δ' επι ταφρον ιων απο τειχεος' ουδ' ει Αχαιον
 Μισγετο· μητρος γαρ πυκινην ωπιζετ' εφετμην.
 Ενθα στας ηνο· απατερθε δε Παλλας Αθηνη
 Φθεγξατ· αταρ Τρωεσσιν εν ασπετον ωρσε κυδοιμον
 'Ως δ' άτι αριζηλη φωνη, ὅτε τ' ιαχε σαλπιγξ
 Αστυ περιπλομενων δηιων ὑπο θυμοραιστεων.
 'Ως τοτ' αριζηλη φωνη γενετ' Αιακιδαο.
 'Οι δ' ὡς ουν αιον οπα χιλκεον Αιακιδαο,
 Πασιν ορινθη θυμος· αταρ καλλιτριχες ἵπποι
 Αψ οχεα τροπεον· οσσοντο γαρ αλγεα θυμω.
 'Ηνιοχοι δ' εκπληγεν, επει ιδον ακαματον πνρ
 Δεινουν ὑπερ κεφαλης μεγαθυμον Πηλειωνος
 Δαιομενον· το δε δαι φεα γλαυκωπις Αθηνη.
 Τρις μεν ὑπερ ταφρον μεγαλ' ιαχε διος Αχιλλευς,
 Τρις δε κυκηθησαν Τρωες, κλειτο τ' επικουροι.
 Ενθα δε και τοτ' ολοντο δυωδεκα φωτες αριστοι
 Αμφι σφοις οχεεσσαι και εγχεσιν.

Iliad, Lib. xviii., v. 203.

But up Achilles rose, the lov'd of heaven;
 And Pallas on his mighty shoulders cast
 The shield of Jove; and round about his head
 She put the glory of a golden mist,
 From which there burnt a fiery-flaming light.
 And as, when smoke goes heaven-ward from a town,
 In some far island which its foes besiege,
 Who all day long with dreadful martialness
 Have pour'd from their own town; soon as the sun
 Has set, thick lifted fires are visible,
 Which, rushing upward, make a light in the sky,
 And let the neighbors know, who may perhaps
 Bring help across the sea; so from the head
 Of great Achilles went up an effulgence.

Upon the trench he stood, without the wall,
 But mix'd not with the Greeks, for he rever'd

His mother's word ; and so, thus standing there,
 He shouted ; and Minerva, to his shout,
 Added a dreadful cry ; and there arose
 Among the Trojans an unspeakable tumult.
 And as the clear voice of a trumpet, blown
 Against a town by spirit-withering foes,
 So sprang the clear voice of Æacides.
 And when they heard the brazen cry, their hearts
 All leap'd within them ; and the proud-maned horses
 Ran with the chariots round, for they foresaw
 Calamity ; and the charioteers were smitten,
 When they beheld the ever-active fire
 Upon the dreadful head of the great-minded one
 Burning ; for bright-eyed Pallas made it burn.
 Thrice o'er the trench divine Achilles shouted ;
 And thrice the Trojans and their great allies
 Roil'd back ; and twelve of all their noblest men
 Then perished, crush'd by their own arms and chariots.

Of course there is no further question about the body of Patroclus. It is drawn out of the press, and received by the awful hero with tears.

The other passage is where Priam, kneeling before Achilles, and imploring him to give up the dead body of Hector, reminds him of his own father ; who, whatever (says the poor old king) may be his troubles with his enemies, has the blessing of knowing that his son is still alive, and may daily hope to see him return. Achilles, in accordance with the strength and noble honesty of the passions in those times, weeps aloud himself at this appeal, feeling, says Homer, “desire” for his father in his very “limbs.” He joins in grief with the venerable sufferer, and can no longer withstand the look of “his great head and his grey chin.” Observe the exquisite introduction of this last word. It paints the touching fact of the chin’s being imploringly thrown upward by the kneeling old man, and the very motion of his beard as he speaks.

‘Ως αρα φωνησας απεβη προς μακρον Ολυμπον
 ‘Ερμειας· Πριαμος δ' εξ ιππων αλτο χαμαζε,
 Ιδαιον δε κατ' ανθη λιπεν· δε μιμνεν ερυκων
 ‘Ιππους δημιουρους τε· γερων δ' ιθυς κιεν οικον,
 Τη β' Αχιλευς ιζεσκε, Διι φιλος· εν δε μιν αυτον
 ‘Ευρ· έταροι δ' απανευθε καθιειατο· τω δε δύν οιω,

·**Ηρως Αυτομεδων τε και Αλκιμος, οζος Αρον,**
Ποιπνυον παρεοντες νεον δ' απεληγεν εδωδης
Εσθων και πινων, ετι και παρεκειτο τραπεζα.
'Γους δ' ελαθ' εισελθων Πριαμος μεγας, αγχι δ' αρα στας
Χερσιν Αχιλλος λαβε γοννατα, και κυσε χειρας
Δεινας, ανδροφονοντος, αι οι πολεας κτανον νιας.
'Ως δ' άταν ανδρ' ατη πυκινη λαβη, οστ³ ενι πατρη
Φωτα κατακτεινας, αλλων εξικετο δημον,
Ανδρος ες αφινειον, θαμβος δ' εχει εισοροωντας,
'Ως Αχιλλευς θαμβησεν, ιδων Πριαμον θεοειδεα.
Θαμβησαν δε και αλλοι, ες αλληλους δε ιδοντο.
Τον και λισσομενος Πριαμος προς μυθον εειπεν.

Μυησαι πατρος σειο, θεοις επιεικελ' Αχιλλευ,
Τηλικου, ώστερ εγων, ολοω επι γηραος ονδω.
Και μεν που κεινον περιναιετας αμφις εοντες
Τειρονοσ², ουδε τις εστιν αρην και λοιγον αμυναι.
Αλλ' ήτοι κεινος γε, σεθεν ζωοντος ακουων,
Χαιρει τ' εν θυμω, επι τ' ελπεται ηματα παντα
Οφεσθαι φιλον ίνον απο Τροιηθεν ιοντα.
Ανταρ εγω παναποτμος, επει τεκον θιας αριστους
Τροιη εν ευρειη, των δ' ουτινα φημι λελειφθαι.
Πεντηκοντα μοι ησαν, οτ² ηλυθον νιες Αχαιων
Εννεακαιδεκα μεν μοι ιης εκ νηδυος ησαν,
Τους δ' αλλους μοι ετικτον ενι μεγαροισι γνναικες.
Των μεν πολλων θυουρος Αρης ύπο γοννατ¹ ελυσεν
'Ως δε μοι οιος εην, ειρυτο δε αστυ και αυτονς,
Τον συ πρωην κτεινας, αμυνομενον περι πατρης,
'Εκτορα του νυν έινεχ² ίκανω ηνας Αχαιων,
Αλυσομενος παρα σειο, φερω δ' απερεισι¹ αποινα.
Αλλ' αιδειο θεους, Αχιλλευ, αυτον τ' ελεησον,
Μυησαμενος σου πατρος² εγω δ' ελεεινοτερος περ,
Ετλην δ, δι ουπω τις επιχθονιος βροτος αλλος,
Ανδρος πανδοφονοιο ποτι στομα χειρ² ορεγεσθαι.

'Ως φατο³ τω δ' αρα πατρος θυ¹ ίμερον ωρσε γοοιο.
Αφαμενος δ' αρα χειρος, απωσατο ηκα γεροντα.
Τω δε μυησαμενω, δ μεν Έκτορος ανδροφονοιο,
Κλαι¹ αδινα, προπαροιθε ποδων Αχιλλος ελυσθεις.
Ανταρ Αχιλλευς κλαιειν έον πατερ¹, αλλοτε δ' αυτε
Πατροκλον² των δε στοναχη κατα δωματ² ορωρει.
Αντερ επει φα γοοιο τεταρπετο διος Αχιλλευς,
Και βι απο πραπιδων ηλθ² ίμερος ηδ² απο γνιων,
Αυτικ¹ απο θρονου ωρτο, γεροντα δε χειρος ανιστη,
Οικτυρω πολιον τε καρη, πολιον τε γενειον.

Iliad, Lib. xxiv., v. 403.

So saying, Mercury vanished up to heaven :
And Priam then alighted from his chariot,
Leaving Idœus with it, who remain'd
Holding the mules and horses ; and the old man
Went straight in-doors, where the belov'd of Jove
Achilles sat, and found him. In the room
Were others, but apart ; and two alone,
The hero Automedon, and Alcimus,
A branch of Mars, stood by him. They had been
At meals, and had not yet removed the board.
Great Priam came, without their seeing him,
And kneeling down, he clasp'd Achilles' knees,
And kiss'd those terrible, homicidal hands,
Which had deprived him of so many sons.
And as a man who is press'd heavily
For having slain another, flies away
To foreign lands, and comes into the house
Of some great man, and is beheld with wonder,
So did Achilles wonder to see Priam ;
And the rest wonder'd, looking at each other.
But Priam, praying to him, spoke these words :—
“ God-like Achilles, think of thine own father !
To the same age have we both come, the same
Weak pass ; and though the neighboring chiefs may vex
Him also, and his borders find no help,
Yet when he hears that thou art still alive,
He gladdens inwardly, and daily hopes
To see his dear son coming back from Troy.
But I, bereav'd old Priam ! I had once
Brave sons in Troy, and now I cannot say
That one is left me. Fifty children had I,
When the Greeks came ; nineteen were of one womb ;
The rest my women bore me in my house.
The knees of many of these fierce Mars has loosen'd ;
And he who had no peer, Troy's prop and theirs,
Him hast thou kill'd now, fighting for his country,
Hector ; and for his sake am I come here
To ransom him, bringing a countless ransom.
But thou, Achilles, fear the gods, and think
Of thine own father, and have mercy on me ;
For I am much more wretched, and have borne
What never mortal bore, I think, on earth,
To lift unto my lips the hand of him
Who slew my boys.”

He ceased ; and there arose
Sharp longing in Achilles for his father ;
And taking Priam by the hand, he gently
Put him away ; for both shed tears to think
Of other times ; the one, most bitter ones
For Hector, and with wilful wretchedness
Lay right before Achilles : and the other,
For his own father now, and now his friend ;
And the whole house might hear them as they moan'd.
But when divine Achilles had refresh'd
His soul with tears, and sharp desire had left
His heart and limbs, he got up from his throne,
And rais'd the old man by the hand, and took
Pity on his grey head and his grey chin.

O lovely and immortal privilege of genius ! that can stretch its hand out of the wastes of time, thousands of years back, and touch our eyelids with tears. In these passages there is not a word which a man of the most matter-of-fact understanding might not have written, *if he had thought of it*. But in poetry, feeling and imagination are necessary to the perception and presentation even of matters of fact. They, and they only, see what is proper to be told, and what to be kept back ; what is pertinent, affecting, and essential. Without feeling, there is a want of delicacy and distinction ; without imagination, there is no true embodiment. In poets, even good of their kind, but without a genius for narration, the action would have been encumbered or diverted with ingenious mistakes. The over-contemplative would have given us too many remarks ; the over-lyrical, a style too much carried away ; the over-fanciful, conceits and too many similes ; the unimaginative, the facts without the feeling, and not even those. We should have been told nothing of the "grey chin," of the house hearing them as they moaned, or of Achilles gently putting the old man aside ; much less of that yearning for his father, which made the hero tremble in every limb. Writers without the greatest passion and power do not feel in this way, nor are capable of expressing the feeling ; though there is enough sensibility and imagination all over the world to enable mankind to be moved by it, when the poet strikes his truth into their hearts.

The reverse of imagination is exhibited in pure absence of

ideas, in commonplaces, and, above all, in conventional metaphor, or such images and their phraseology as have become the common property of discourse and writing. Addison's Cato is full of them.

Passion unpitied and successless love
Plant daggers in my breast.

I've sounded my Numidians, man by man,
 And find them *ripe for a revolt.*

The virtuous Marcia *towers above her sex.*

Of the same kind is his "courting the yoke"—"distracting my very heart"—"calling up all" one's "father" in one's soul—"working every nerve"—"copying a bright example;" in short, the whole play, relieved now and then with a smart sentence or turn of words. The following is a pregnant example of plagiarism and weak writing. It is from another tragedy of Addison's time,—the Mariamne of Fenton :—

Mariamne, *with superior charms,*
Triumphs o'er reason: in her look she *bears*
 A paradise of ever-blooming sweets;
 Fair as the first idea beauty *prints*
 In her young lover's soul; a winning grace
 Guides every gesture, and obsequious love
Attends on all her steps.

"Triumphing o'er reason" is an old acquaintance of everybody's. "Paradise in her look" is from the Italian poets through Dryden. "Fair as the first idea," &c., is from Milton spoilt; "winning grace" and "steps" from Milton and Tibullus, both spoilt. Whenever beauties are stolen by such a writer, they are sure to be spoilt; just as when a great writer borrows, he improves.

To come now to Fancy—she is a younger sister of Imagination, without the other's weight of thought and feeling. Imagination indeed, purely so called, is all feeling; the feeling of the subtlest and most affecting analogies; the perception of sympathies in the natures of things, or in their popular attributes. Fancy is sporting with their resemblance, real or supposed, and with airy and fantastical creations.

Rouse yourself; and the weak wanton Cupid
 Shall from your neck unloose his amorous fold,
And, like a dew-drop from the lion's mane,
Be shook to air.

Troilus and Cressida, Act iii., sc. 3.

That is imagination;—the strong mind sympathizing with the strong beast, and the weak love identified with the weak dew-drop.

Oh!—and I forsooth
 In love! I that have been love's whip!
A very beadle to a humorous sigh!—
 A domineering pedant o'er the boy,—
 This whimpled, whining, purblind, wayward boy,—
 This senior-junior, giant-dwarf, Dan Cupid,
Regent of love-rhymes, lord of folded arms,
The anointed sovereign of sighs and groans, &c.

Love's Labor's Lost, Act iii., sc. 1.

That is fancy;—a combination of images not in their nature connected, or brought together by the feeling, but by the will and pleasure; and having just enough hold of analogy to betray it into the hands of its smiling subjector.

Silent icicles
Quietly shining to the quiet moon.
 Coleridge's *Frost at Midnight*.

That, again, is imagination;—analogical sympathy; and exquisite of its kind it is.

"You are now sailed *into the north of my lady's opinion*; where you will hang *like an icicle on a Dutchman's beard*, unless you do redeem it by some laudable attempt."

Twelfth Night, Act iii., sc. 2.

And that is fancy;—one image capriciously suggested by another, and but half connected with the subject of discourse; nay, half opposed to it; for in the gaiety of the speaker's animal spirits, the "Dutchman's beard" is made to represent the lady!

Imagination belongs to Tragedy, or the serious muse; Fancy

to the comic. Macbeth, Lear, Paradise Lost, the poem of Dante, are full of imagination : the Midsummer Night's Dream and the Rape of the Lock, of fancy : Romeo and Juliet, the Tempest, the Fairy Queen, and the Orlando Furioso, of both. The terms were formerly identical, or used as such ; and neither is the best that might be found. The term Imagination is too confined : often too material. It presents too invariably the idea of a solid body ;—of “images” in the sense of the plaster-cast cry about the streets. Fancy, on the other hand, while it means nothing but a spiritual image or apparition (*Φαντασμα*, appearance, *phantom*), has rarely that freedom from visibility which is one of the highest privileges of imagination. Viola, in Twelfth Night, speaking of some beautiful music, says :—

It gives a very echo to the seat,
Where Love is throned.

In this charming thought, fancy and imagination are combined ; yet the fancy, the assumption of Love's sitting on a throne, is the image of a solid body ; while the imagination, the sense of sympathy between the passion of love and impassioned music, presents us no image at all. Some new term is wanting to express the more spiritual sympathies of what is called Imagination.

One of the teachers of Imagination is Melancholy ; and like Melancholy, as Albert Durer has painted her, she looks out among the stars, and is busied with spiritual affinities and the mysteries of the universe. Fancy turns her sister's wizard instruments into toys. She takes a telescope in her hand, and puts a mimic star on her forehead, and sallies forth as an emblem of astronomy. Her tendency is to the child-like and sportive. She chases butterflies, while her sister takes flight with angels. She is the genius of fairies, of gallantries, of fashions ; of whatever is quaint and light, showy and capricious ; of the poetical part of wit. She adds wings and feelings to the images of wit ; and delights as much to people nature with smiling ideal sympathies, as wit does to bring antipathies together, and make them strike light on absurdity. Fancy, however, is not

incapable of sympathy with Imagination. She is often found in her company ; always, in the case of the greatest poets ; often in that of less, though with them she is the greater favorite. Spenser has great imagination and fancy too, but more of the latter ; Milton both also, the very greatest, but with imagination predominant ; Chaucer, the strongest imagination of real life, beyond any writers but Homer, Dante, and Shakspeare, and in comic painting inferior to none ; Pope has hardly any imagination, but he has a great deal of fancy ; Coleridge little fancy, but imagination exquisite. Shakspeare alone, of all poets that ever lived, enjoyed the regard of both in equal perfection. A whole fairy poem of his writing will be found in the present volume. See also his famous description of Queen Mab and her equipage, in Romeo and Juliet :—

Her waggon-spokes made of long spinners' legs ;
The cover, of the wings of grasshoppers ;
Her traces of the smallest spider's web ;
Her collars of the moonshine's watery beams, &c.

That is Fancy, in its playful creativeness. As a small but pretty rival specimen, less known, take the description of a fairy palace from Drayton's Nymphidia :—

This palace standeth in the air,
By necromancy placèd there,
That it no tempest needs to fear,
Which way soe'er it blow it :
And somewhat southward tow'r'd the noon,
Whence lies a way up to the moon,
And thence the Fairy can as soon
Pass to the earth below it.
The walls of spiders' legs are made,
Well morticèd and finely laid :
He was the master of his trade,
It curiously that builded :
The windows of the eyes of cats :

(because they see best at night)

And for the roof instead of slats
Is cover'd with the skins of bats
With moonshine that are gilded.

Here also is a fairy bed, very delicate, from the same poet's Muse's Elysium.

*Of leaves of roses, white and red,
Shall be the covering of the bed ;
The curtains, vallen, tester all,
Shall be the flower imperial ;
And for the fringe it all along
With azure hare-bells shall be hung.
Of lilies shall the pillows be
*With down stuff of the butterfly.**

Of fancy, so full of gusto as to border on imagination, Sir John Suckling, in his "Ballad on a Wedding," has given some of the most playful and charming specimens in the language. They glance like twinkles in the eye, or cherries bedewed.

*Her feet beneath her petticoat,
Like little mice stole in and out,
As if they fear'd the light ;
But oh ! she dances such a way !
No sun upon an Easter day,
Is half so fine a sight.*

It is very daring, and has a sort of playful grandeur, to compare a lady's dancing with the sun. But as the sun has it all to himself in the heavens, so she, in the blaze of her beauty, on earth. This is imagination fairly displacing fancy. The following has enchanted everybody :—

*Her lips were red, and one was thin,
Compared with that was next her chin,
Some bee had stung it newly.*

Every reader has stolen a kiss at that lip, gay or grave.

With regard to the principle of Variety in Uniformity by which verse ought to be modulated, and one-ness of impression diversely produced, it has been contended by some, that Poetry need not be written in verse at all; that prose is as good a medium, provided poetry be conveyed through it; and that to think otherwise is to confound letter with spirit, or form with essence. But the opinion is a prosaical mistake. Fitness and unfitness for

song, or metrical excitement, just make all the difference between a poetical and prosaical subject; and the reason why verse is necessary to the form of poetry, is, that the perfection of poetical spirit demands it; that the circle of enthusiasm, beauty, and power, is incomplete without it. I do not mean to say that a poet can never show himself a poet in prose; but that, being one, his desire and necessity will be to write in verse; and that, if he were unable to do so, he would not, and could not, deserve his title. Verse to the true poet is no clog. It is idly called a trammel and a difficulty. It is a help. It springs from the same enthusiasm as the rest of his impulses, and is necessary to their satisfaction and effect. Verse is no more a clog than the condition of rushing upward is a clog to fire, or than the roundness and order of the globe we live on is a clog to the freedom and variety that abound within its sphere. Verse is no dominator over the poet, except inasmuch as the bond is reciprocal, and the poet dominates over the verse. They are lovers playfully challenging each other's rule, and delighted equally to rule and to obey. Verse is the final proof to the poet that his mastery over his art is complete. It is the shutting up of his powers in "measureful content;" the answer of form to his spirit; of strength and ease to his guidance. It is the willing action, the proud and fiery happiness, of the winged steed on whose back he has vaulted,

To witch the world with wondrous horsemanship.

Verse, in short, is that finishing, and rounding, and "tuneful planetting" of the poet's creations, which is produced of necessity by the smooth tendencies of their energy or inward working, and the harmonious dance into which they are attracted round the orb of the beautiful. Poetry, in its complete sympathy with beauty, must, of necessity, leave no sense of the beautiful, and no power over its forms, unmanifested; and verse flows as inevitably from this condition of its integrity, as other laws of proportion do from any other kind of embodiment of beauty (say that of the human figure), however free and various the movements may be that play within their limits. What great poet ever wrote his poems in prose? or where is a good prose poem, of any length, to be found? The poetry of the Bible is under-

stood to be in verse, in the original. Mr. Hazlitt has said a good word for those prose enlargements of some fine old song, which are known by the name of Ossian ; and in passages they deserve what he said ; but he judiciously abstained from saying anything about the form. Is Gesner's Death of Abel a poem ? or Hervey's Meditations ? The Pilgrim's Progress has been called one ; and, undoubtedly, Bunyan had a genius which tended to make him a poet, and one of no mean order ; and yet it was of as ungenerous and low a sort as was compatible with so lofty an affinity ; and this is the reason why it stopped where it did. He had a craving after the beautiful, but not enough of it in himself to echo to its music. On the other hand, the possession of the beautiful will not be sufficient without force to utter it. The author of Telemachus had a soul full of beauty and tenderness. He was not a man who, if he had had a wife and children, would have run away from them, as Bunyan's hero did, to get a place by himself in heaven. He was "a little lower than the angels," like our own Bishop Jewells and Berkeleys ; and yet he was no poet. He was too delicately, not to say feebly, absorbed in his devotions, to join in the energies of the seraphic choir.

Every poet, then, is a versifier ; every fine poet an excellent one ; and he is the best whose verse exhibits the greatest amount of strength, sweetness, straightforwardness, unsuperfluousness, variety, and one-ness ; one-ness, that is to say, consistency, in the general impression, metrical and moral ; and variety, or every pertinent diversity of tone and rhythm, in the process. Strength is the muscle of verse, and shows itself in the number and force of the marked syllables ; as,

Sonorous métal blòwing märtial sòunds.

Paradiss Lost.

Behèmoth, biggest born of eàrth, ùphèav'd
His vástness.

Id.

Blòw winds and cràck your chèeks ? ràge ! blòw !
You càtáracts and hurricànoes, spòut,
Till you have drènch'd our stèeples, dròwn'd the còcks !

You sùlpurous and thought-èxecuting fîres,
 Vaùnt couriers of oak-clèaving thùnderbòlts,
 Singe my whíte hèad ! and thòu, all-shàking thùnder,
 Strike flat the thick rotundiþy o' the wòrld !

Lear.

Unexpected locations of the accent double this force, and render it characteristic of passion and abruptness. And here comes into play the reader's corresponding fineness of ear, and his retardations and accelerations in accordance with those of the poet :—

Then in the keyhole-turns
 The intricâfe wards, and every bolt and bar
 Unfastens. On a súddén open fly
 Wîth impétuous recoil and jarring sound
 The infernal doors, and on their hinges grate
 Harsh thunder.

Par. Lost, Book II.

Abòmínablé—unùttérablé—and worse
 Than fables yet have feigned.

Id.

Wàllowing ünwieldy—ënòrmous in their gait.

Id.

Of unusual passionate accent, there is an exquisite specimen in the Fairy Queen, where Una is lamenting her desertion by the Red-Cross Knight :—

But he, my lion, and my noble lord,
 How does he find in cruel heart to hate
 Her that him lov'd, and ever most ador'd
As the god of my life ? Why hath he me abhorrd ?

See the whole stanza, with a note upon it, in the present volume.

The abuse of strength is harshness and heaviness ; the reverse of it is weakness. There is a noble sentiment,—it appears both in Daniel's and Sir John Beaumont's works, but is most probably the latter's,—which is a perfect outrage of strength in the sound of the words :—

Only the firmest and the *constant'st* hearts
God sets to act the *stout'st* and hardest parts.

Stout'st and *constant'st* for “stoutest” and “most constant!” It is as bad as the intentional crabbedness of the line in Hudibras;

He that hangs or *beats out's* brains,
The devil's in him if *he* feigns.

Beats out's brains, for “beats out his brains.” Of heaviness, Davenant’s “Gondibert” is a formidable specimen, almost throughout:—

With silence (òrder's help, and märk of càre)
They chïde thàt nòise which hèdless yòuth affect;
Still course for ùse, for health thèy clèarness wèar,
And sàve in wèll-fix'd àrms, all nìceness chèck'd.
Thèy thought, thòse that, unàrméd, expòs'd fràil lìfe,
But nàked nàture vàliantly betrà'y'd;
Whò wàs, though nàked, sàfe, till pride màiè strífe,
But màiè defènce must ùse, nòw dànger's màiè.

And so he goes digging and lumbering on, like a heavy preacher thumping the pulpit in italics, and spoiling many ingenious reflections.

Weakness in versification is want of accent and emphasis. It generally accompanies prosaicalness, and is the consequence of weak thoughts, and of the affectation of a certain well-bred enthusiasm. The writings of the late Mr. Hayley were remarkable for it; and it abounds among the lyrical imitators of Cowley, and the whole of what is called our French school of poetry, when it aspired above its wit and “sense.” It sometimes breaks down in a horrible, hopeless manner, as if giving way at the first step. The following ludicrous passage in Congreve, intended to be particularly fine, contains an instance:—

And lo ! Silence himself is here ;
Methinks I see the midnight god appear.
In all his downy pomp array'd,
Behold the reverend shade.

*An ancient sigh he sits upon !!!
Whose memory of sound is long since gone,
And purposely annihilated for his throne !!!
Ode on the singing of Mrs. Arabella Hunt.*

See also the would-be enthusiasm of Addison about music :

For ever consecrate the *day*
To music and *Cecilia* ;
Music, the greatest good that mortals know,
And all of heaven we have below,
Music can noble *HINTS impart !!!*

It is observable that the unpoetic masters of ridicule are apt to make the most ridiculous mistakes, when they come to affect a strain higher than the one they are accustomed to. But no wonder. Their habits neutralize the enthusiasm it requires.

4. Sweetness, though not identical with smoothness, any more than feeling is with sound, always includes it; and smoothness is a thing so little to be regarded for its own sake, and indeed so worthless in poetry but for some taste of sweetness, that I have not thought necessary to mention it by itself; though such an all-in-all in versification was it regarded not a hundred years back, that Thomas Warton himself, an idolator of Spenser, ventured to wish the following line in the *Fairy Queen*,

And was admirèd much of fools, *wòmen*, and boys—

altered to

And was admirèd much of women, fools, and boys—

thus destroying the fine scornful emphasis on the first syllable of “women!” (an ungallant intimation, by the way, against the fair sex, very startling in this no less woman-loving than great poet.) Any poetaster can be smooth. Smoothness abounds in all small poets, as sweetness does in the greater. Sweetness is the smoothness of grace and delicacy,—of the sympathy with the pleasing and lovely. Spenser is full of it,—Shakspeare—Beaumont and Fletcher—Coleridge. Of Spenser’s and Coleridge’s versification it is the prevailing characteristic. Its main secrets are a smooth progression between variety and sameness,

and a voluptuous sense of the continuous,—“linked sweetness long drawn out.” Observe the first and last lines of the stanza in the Fairy Queen, describing a shepherd brushing away the gnats;—the open and the close *e's* in the one,

As gentle shepherd in sweet eventide—

and the repetition of the word *oft*, and the fall from the vowel *a*, into the two *u's* in the other,—

She brusheth *oft*, and *oft* doth mār their mūrmūrings.

So in his description of two substances in the handling, both equally smooth;—

Each smoother seems than each, and each than each seems smoother.

An abundance of examples from his poetry will be found in the volume before us. His beauty revolves on itself with conscious loveliness. And Coleridge is worthy to be named with him, as the reader will see also, and has seen already. Let him take a sample meanwhile from the poem called the Day-Dream! Observe both the variety and sameness of the vowels, and the repetition of the soft consonants:—

My eyes make pictures when they're shut:—

I see a fountain, large and fair,

A willow and a ruin'd hut,

And *thee* and *me* and Mary there.

O Mary! make thy gentle lap our pillow;

Bend o'er us, like a bower, my beautiful green willow.

By Straightforwardness is meant the flow of words in their natural order, free alike from mere prose, and from those inversions to which bad poets recur in order to escape the charge of prose, but chiefly to accommodate their rhymes. In Shadwell's play of Psyche, Venus gives the sisters of the heroine an answer, of which the following is the *entire* substance, literally, in so many words. The author had nothing better for her to say:

“I receive your prayers with kindness, and will give success to your

nopes. I have seen, with anger, mankind adore your sister's beauty and deplore her scorn : which they shall do no more. For I'll so resent their idolatry, as shall content your wishes to the full."

Now in default of all imagination, fancy, and expression, how was the writer to turn these words into poetry or rhyme ? Simply by diverting them from their natural order, and twisting the halves of the sentences each before the other.

With kindness I your prayers receive,
And to your hopes success will give.
I have, with anger, seen mankind adore
Your sister's beauty and her scorn deplore ;
Which they shall do no more.
For their idolatry I'll so resent,
As shall your wishes to the full content !!

This is just as if a man were to allow that there was no poetry in the words, "How do you find yourself?" "Very well, I thank you ;" but to hold them inspired, if altered into

Yourself how do you find ?
Very well, you I thank.

It is true, the best writers in Shadwell's age were addicted to these inversions, partly for their own reasons, as far as rhyme was concerned, and partly because they held it to be writing in the classical and Virgilian manner. What has since been called Artificial Poetry was then flourishing, in contradistinction to Natural; or Poetry seen chiefly through art and books, and not in its first sources. But when the artificial poet partook of the natural, or, in other words, was a true poet after his kind, his best was always written in the most natural and straightforward manner. Hear Shadwell's antagonist Dryden. Not a particle of inversion, beyond what is used for the sake of emphasis in common discourse, and this only in one line (the last but three), is to be found in his immortal character of the Duke of Buckingham :—

A man so various, that he seemed to be
Not one, but all mankind's epitome :

Stiff in opinions, *always in the wrong,*
Was everything by starts, and nothing long;
 But in the course of one revolving moon
 Was chemist, fiddler, statesman, and buffoon :
 Then all for women, rhyming, dancing, drinking,
Besides ten thousand freaks that died in thinking.
Blest madman ! who could every hour employ
With something new to wish or to enjoy !
 Railing and praising were his usual themes ;
 And both, to show his judgment, in extremes :
 So over violent, or over civil,
That every man with him was god or devil.
 In squandering wealth was his peculiar art ;
Nothing went unrewarded, but desert.
 Beggar'd by fools, whom still he found too late,
He had his jest, and they had his estate.

Inversion itself was often turned into a grace in these poets, and may be in others, by the power of being superior to it ; using it only with a classical air, and as a help lying next to them, instead of a salvation which they are obliged to seek. In jesting passages also it sometimes gave the rhyme a turn agreeably wilful, or an appearance of choosing what lay in its way ; as if a man should pick up a stone to throw at another's head, where a less confident foot would have stumbled over it. Such is Dryden's use of the word *might*—the mere sign of a tense—in his pretended ridicule of the monkish practice of rising to sing psalms in the night.

And much they griev'd to see so nigh their hall
 The bird that warn'd St. Peter of his fall ;
 That he should raise his mitred crest on high,
 And clap his wings and call his family
 To sacred rites ; and vex th' ethereal powers
 With midnight matins at uncivil hours ;
 Nay more, his quiet neighbors should molest
Just in the sweetness of their morning rest.

(What a line full of “another doze” is that !)

Beast of a bird ! supinely, when he *might*
 Lie snug and sleep, to rise before the light !

What if his dull forefathers used that cry?
Could he not let a bad example die?

I the more gladly quote instances like those of Dryden, to illustrate the points in question, because they are specimens of the very highest kind of writing in the heroic couplet upon subjects not heroical. As to prosaicalness in general, it is sometimes indulged in by young writers on the plea of its being natural; but this is a mere confusion of triviality with propriety, and is usually the result of indolence.

Unsuperfluosity is rather a matter of style in general, than of the sound and order of words: and yet versification is so much strengthened by it, and so much weakened by its opposite, that it could not but come within the category of its requisites. When superfluosity of words is not occasioned by overflowing animal spirits, as in Beaumont and Fletcher, or by the very genius of luxury, as in Spenser (in which cases it is enrichment as well as overflow), there is no worse sign for a poet altogether, except pure barrenness. Every word that could be taken away from a poem, unreferrable to either of the above reasons for it, is a damage; and many such are death; for there is nothing that posterity seems so determined to resent as this want of respect for its time and trouble. The world is too rich in books to endure it. Even true poets have died of this Writer's Evil. Trifling ones have survived, with scarcely any pretensions but the terseness of their trifles. What hope can remain for wordy mediocrity? Let the discerning reader take up any poem, pen in hand, for the purpose of discovering how many words he can strike out of it that give him no requisite ideas, no relevant ones that he cares for, and no reasons for the rhyme beyond its necessity, and he will see what blot and havoc he will make in many an admired production of its day,—what marks of its inevitable fate. Bulky authors in particular, however safe they may think themselves, would do well to consider what parts of their cargo they might dispense with in their proposed voyage down the gulfs of time; for many a gallant vessel, thought indestructible in its age, has perished;—many a load of words, expected to be in eternal demand, gone to join the wrecks of

self-love, or rotted in the warehouses of change and vicissitude. I have said the more on this point, because in an age when the true inspiration has undoubtedly been re-awakened by Coleridge and his fellows, and we have so many new poets coming forward, it may be as well to give a general warning against that tendency to an accumulation and ostentation of *thoughts*, which is meant to be a refutation in full of the pretensions of all poetry less cogitabund, whatever may be the requirements of its class. Young writers should bear in mind, that even some of the very best materials for poetry are not poetry built ; and that the smallest marble shrine, of exquisite workmanship, outvalues all that architect ever chipped away. Whatever can be dispensed with is rubbish.

Variety in versification consists in whatsoever can be done for the prevention of monotony, by diversity of stops and cadences, distribution of emphasis, and retardation and acceleration of time ; for the whole real secret of versification is a musical secret, and is not attainable to any vital effect, save by the ear of genius. All the mere knowledge of feet and numbers, of accent and quantity, will no more impart it, than a knowledge of the "Guide to Music" will make a Beethoven or a Paisiello. It is a matter of sensibility and imagination ; of the beautiful in poetical passion, accompanied by musical ; of the imperative necessity for a pause here, and a cadence there, and a quicker or slower utterance in this or that place, created by analogies of sound with sense, by the fluctuations of feeling, by the demands of the gods and graces that visit the poet's harp, as the winds visit that of Æolus. The same time and quantity which are occasioned by the spiritual part of this secret, thus become its formal ones,—not feet and syllables, long and short, iambics or trochees ; which are the reduction of it to its less than dry bones. You might get, for instance, not only ten and eleven, but thirteen or fourteen syllables into a rhyming, as well as blank, heroic verse, if time and the feeling permitted ; and in irregular measure this is often done ; just as musicians put twenty notes in a bar instead of two, quavers instead of minims, according as the feeling they are expressing impels them to fill up the time with short and hurried notes, or with long ; or as

the choristers in a cathedral retard or precipitate the words of the chaunt, according as the quantity of its notes, and the colon which divides the verse of the psalm, conspire to demand it. Had the moderns borne this principle in mind when they settled the prevailing systems of verse, instead of learning them, as they appear to have done, from the first drawling and one-syllabled notation of the church hymns, we should have retained all the advantages of the more numerous versification of the ancients, without being compelled to fancy that there was no alternative for us between our syllabical uniformity and the hexameters or other special forms unsuited to our tongues. But to leave this question alone, we will present the reader with a few sufficing specimens of the difference between monotony and variety in versification, first from Pope, Dryden, and Milton, and next from Gay and Coleridge. The following is the boasted melody of the nevertheless exquisite poet of the "Rape of the Lock,"—exquisite in his wit and fancy, though not in his numbers. The reader will observe that it is literally *see-saw*, like the rising and falling of a plank, with a light person at one end who is jerked up in the briefer time, and a heavier one who is set down more leisurely at the other. It is in the otherwise charming description of the heroine of that poem:—

On her white breast—a sparkling cross she wore,
 Which Jews might kiss—and infidels adore;
 Her lively looks—a sprightly mind disclose,
 Quick as her eyes—and as unfix'd as those;
 Favors to none—to all she smiles extends,
 Oft she rejects—but never once offends;
 Bright as the sun—her eyes the gazers strike,
 And like the sun—they shine on all alike;
 Yet graceful ease—and sweetness void of pride,
 Might hide her faults—if belles had faults to hide;
 If to her share—some female errors fall,
 Look on her face—and you'll forget them all.

Compare with this the description of Iphigenia in one of Dryden's stories from Boccaccio:—

It happen'd—on a summer's holiday,
 That to the greenwood shade—he took his way,
 For Cymon shunn'd the church—and used not much to pray, }
 }

His quarter-staff—which he could ne'er forsake,
Hung half before—and half behind his back :
He trudg'd along—not knowing what he sought,
And whistled as he went—for want of thought.

By chance conducted—or by thirst constrain'd,
The deep recesses of a grove he gain'd ;—
Where—in a plain defended by a wood,
Crept through the matted grass—a crystal flood, }
By which—an alabaster fountain stood ;
And on the margent of the fount was laid—
Attended by her slaves—a sleeping maid ;
Like Dian and her nymphs—when, tir'd with sport,
To rest by cool Eurotas they resort.—
The dame herself—the goddess well express'd
Not more distinguished by her purple vest—
Than by the charming features of the face—
And e'en in slumber—a superior grace :
Her comely limbs—compos'd with decent care,
Her body shaded—by a light cymarr, }
Her bosom to the view—was only bare ;
Where two beginning paps were scarcely spied—
For yet their places were but signified.—
The fanning wind upon her bosom blows—
To meet the fanning wind—the bosom rose ;
The fanning wind—and purling stream—continue her repose. }

For a further variety take, from the same author's Theodore and Honoria, a passage in which the couplets are run one into the other, and all of it modulated, like the former, according to the feeling demanded by the occasion ;

Whilst listening to the murmuring leaves he stood—
More than a mile immers'd within the wood—
At once the wind was laid.—The whispering sound
Was dumb.—A rising earthquake rock'd the ground.
With deeper brown the grove was overspread—
A sudden horror seiz'd his giddy head— }
And his ears tinkled—and his color fled. }

Nature was in alarm.—Some danger nigh
Seem'd threaten'd—though unseen to mortal eye.
Unus'd to fear—he summon'd all his soul,
And stood collected in himself—and whole :
Not long.—

But for a crowning specimen of variety of pause and accent, apart from emotion, nothing can surpass the account, in *Paradise Lost*, of the Devil's search for an accomplice ;—

There was a place,
Now nòt—though Sìn—not Time—first wrougħ the chàngē,
Where Tigris—at the foot of Pàradise,
Into a gùlf—shòt under ground—till pàrt
Ròse up a fountaine by the Trèe of Lìfe.
In with the river sunk—and *with it rōse*
Sàtan—invòlv'd in rìsing mìst—then sòught
Whère to lie hid.—Sèa he had search'd—and länd
From Eden over Pòntus—and the pòl
Mæotis—*up* beyond the river *Ob*;
Dòwnward as fär antàctic;—and in lèngth
Wèst from Oròntes—to the òcean bàrr'd
At Dàriën—thènce to the länd whère flòws
Gànges and Indus.—Thùs the orb he ròam'd
With nàrrow sèarch;—and with inspèction dèep
Consider'd èvery crèature—which of all
Mòst opportùne mìght sèrve his wiles—and fòund
The sèrpent—sùbtlest bèast of all the fièld.

If the reader cast his eye again over this passage, he will not find a verse in it which is not varied and harmonized in the most remarkable manner. Let him notice in particular that curious balancing of the lines in the sixth and tenth verses :—

In with the river sunk, &c.,

and

Up beyond the river *Ob*.

It might, indeed, be objected to the versification of Milton, that it exhibits too constant a perfection of this kind. It sometimes forces upon us too great a sense of consciousness on the part of the composer. We miss the first sprightly runnings of verse,—the ease and sweetness of spontaneity. Milton, I think, also too often condenses weight into heaviness.

Thus much concerning the chief of our two most popular measures. The other, called octosyllabic, or the measure of

eight syllables, offered such facilities for *namby-pamby*, that it had become a jest as early as the time of Shakspeare, who makes Touchstone call it the “butterwoman’s rate to market,” and the “very false gallop of verses.” It has been advocated, in opposition to the heroic measure, upon the ground that ten syllables lead a man into epithets and other superfluities, while eight syllables compress him into a sensible and pithy gentleman. But the heroic measure laughs at it. So far from compressing, it converts one line into two, and sacrifices everything to the quick and importunate return of the rhyme. With Dryden, compare Gay, even in the strength of Gay,—

The wind was high—the window shakes;
With sudden start the miser wakes;
Along the silent room he stalks,

(A miser never “stalks;” but a rhyme was desired for “walks”)

Looks back, and trembles as he walks :
Each lock and every bolt he tries,
In every creek and corner pries.
Then opes the chest with treasure stor’d,
And stands in rapture o’er his hoard ;

(“Hoard” and “treasure stor’d” are just made for one another)

But now, with sudden qualms possess’d,
He wrings his hands, he beats his breast ;
By conscience stung, he wildly stares,
And thus his guilty soul declares.

And so he denounces his gold, as miser never denounced it ; and sighs, because

Virtue resides on earth no more !

Coleridge saw the mistake which had been made with regard to this measure, and restored it to the beautiful freedom of which it was capable, by calling to mind the liberties allowed its old

musical professors the minstrels, and dividing it by *time* instead of *syllables* ;—by the *beat of four* into which you might get as many syllables as you could, instead of allotting eight syllables to the poor time, whatever it might have to say. He varied it further with alternate rhymes and stanzas, with rests and omissions precisely analogous to those in music, and rendered it altogether worthy to utter the manifold thoughts and feelings of himself and his lady Christabel. He even ventures, with an exquisite sense of solemn strangeness and license (for there is witchcraft going forward), to introduce a couplet of blank verse, itself as mystically and beautifully modulated as anything in the music of Glück or Weber.

*'Tis the middle of night by the castle clock,
And the owls have awaken'd the crowing cock ;
Tu-whit !—Tu-whoo !
And hark, again ! the crowing cock,
How drowsily he crew.
Sir Leoline, the baron rich,
Hath a toothless mastiff bitch ;
From her kennel beneath the rock
She maketh answer to the clock
Four for the quarters and twelve for the hour,
Ever and aye, by shine and shower,
Sixteen short howls, not over loud :
Some say, she sees my lady's shroud.

*Is the night chilly and dark !
The night is chilly, but not dark.*
The thin grey cloud is spread on high,
It covers, but not hides, the sky.
The moon is behind, and at the full,
And yet she looks both small and dull.
The night is chilly, the cloud is grey ;*

(These are not superfluities, but mysterious returns of importunate feeling)

*Tis a month before the month of May,
And the spring comes slowly up this way.
The lovely lady, Christabel,
Whom her father loves so well,
What makes her in the wood so late,
A furlong from the castle-gate ?*

She had dreams all yesternight
 Of her own betrothèd knight;
 And shè in thë midnight wood will pray
 For the wèal of hér lover that's far away.

She stole along, she nothing spoke,
 The sighs she heav'd were soft and low
 And naught was green upon the oak,
 But moss and rarest mistletoe ;
 She kneels beneath the huge oak tree,
 And in silence prayeth she.

The lady sprang up suddenly,
 The lovely lady, Christabel !
 It moan'd as near as near can be,
 But what it is, she cannot tell,
 On the other side it seems to be
 Of thë huge, broad-breasted, old oak trèe

The night is chill, the forest bare ;
 Is it the wind that moaneth bleak

(This “bleak moaning” is a witch’s)

There is not wind enough in the air
 To move away the ringlet curl
 From the lovely lady’s cheek—
 There is not wind enough to twirl
The òne rèd lèaf, the last of its clan,
That dàncës as oftén as dànce it càn,
Hànging sò light and hànging sò high,
On thè tòpmost twig thät loòks up at thè sky

Hush, beating heart of Christabel !
 Jesu Maria, shield her well !
 She folded her arms beneath her cloak,
 And stole to the other side of the oak.
 What sees she there ?

There she sees a damsel bright,
 Dressed in a robe of silken white,
 That shadowy in the moonlight shone :
 The neck that made that white robe wan,
 Her stately neck and arms were bare :
 Her blue-vein’d feet unsandall’d were ;
 And wildly glitter’d, here and there,
 The gems entangled in her hair.

I guess 'twas *frightful* there to see
A lady so richly clad as she—
Beautiful exceedingly.

The principle of Variety in Uniformity is here worked out in a style "beyond the reach of art." Every thing is diversified according to the demand of the moment, of the sounds, the sights, the emotions ; the very uniformity of the outline is gently varied ; and yet we feel that the *whole is one and of the same character*, the single and sweet unconsciousness of the heroine making all the rest seem more conscious, and ghastly, and expectant. It is thus that *versification itself becomes part of the sentiment of a poem*, and vindicates the pains that have been taken to show its importance. I know of no very fine versification unaccompanied with fine poetry ; no poetry of a mean order accompanied with verse of the highest.

As to Rhyme, which might be thought too insignificant to mention, it is not at all so. The universal consent of modern Europe, and of the East in all ages, has made it one of the musical beauties of verse for all poetry but epic and dramatic, and even for the former with Southern Europe,—a sustainment for the enthusiasm, and a demand to enjoy. The mastery of it consists in never writing it for its own sake, or at least never appearing to do so ; in knowing how to vary it, to give it novelty, to render it more or less strong, to divide it (when not in couplets) at the proper intervals, to repeat it many times where luxury or animal spirits demand it (see an instance in Titania's speech to the Fairies), to impress an affecting or startling remark with it, and to make it, in comic poetry, a new and surprising addition to the jest.

Large was his bounty and his soul sincere,
 Heav'n did a recompense as largely send ;
 He gave to misery all he had, *a tear* ;
 He gain'd from heav'n ('twas all he wish'd) *a friend*.
 Gray's *Elegy*.

The fops are proud of scandal ; for they cry
 At every lewd, low character, "That's *I*"

Dryden's *Prologue to the Pilgrim*

What makes all doctrines plain and clear ?
About two hundred pounds a year.
 And that which was proved true before,
 Prove false again ? *Two hundred more.*

Hudibras.

Compound for sins they are *inclin'd to*,
 By damning those they have *no mind to*.

— Stor'd with deleterious *med'cines*,
 Which whosoever took is *dead since*.

Id.

Sometimes it is a grace in a master like Butler to force his rhyme, thus showing a laughing wilful power over the most stubborn materials :—

Win

The women, and make them draw in
 The men, as Indians with a *fèmale*
 Tame elephant inveigle *the male*.

Hudibras.

He made an instrument to know
 If the moon shines at full or no ;
 That would, as soon as e'er she *shone, straight*
 Whether 'twere day or night *demonstrate* ;
 Tell what her diameter to an *inch is*,
 And prove that she's not made of *green cheese*.

Id.

Pronounce it, by all means, *grinches*, to make the joke more wilful. The happiest triple rhyme, perhaps, that ever was written, is in Don Juan :—

But oh ! ye lords of ladies *intellectual*,
 Inform us truly,—haven't they *hen-peck'd you all* ?

The sweepingness of the assumption completes the flowing breadth of effect.

Dryden confessed that a rhyme often gave him a thought. Probably the happy word “sprung,” in the following passage from Ben Jonson, was suggested by it ; but then the poet must have had the feeling in him.

— Let our trumpets sound,
And cleave both air and ground
With beating of our drums.

Let every lyre be strung,
Harp, lute, theorbo, *sprung*
With touch of dainty thumbs.

Boileau's trick for appearing to rhyme naturally was to compose the second line of his couplet first! which gives one the crowning idea of the "artificial school of poetry." Perhaps the most perfect master of rhyme, the easiest and most abundant, was the greatest writer of comedy that the world has seen,— Molière.

If a young reader should ask, after all, What is the quickest way of knowing bad poets from good, the best poets from the next best, and so on? the answer is, the only and two-fold way; first, the perusal of the best poets with the greatest attention; and, second, the cultivation of that love of truth and beauty which made them what they are. Every true reader of poetry partakes a more than ordinary portion of the poetic nature; and no one can be completely such, who does not love, or take an interest in, everything that interests the poet, from the firmament to the daisy,—from the highest heart of man to the most pitiable of the low. It is a good practice to read with pen in hand, marking what is liked or doubted. It rivets the attention, realizes the greatest amount of enjoyment, and facilitates reference. It enables the reader also, from time to time, to see what progress he makes with his own mind, and how it grows up towards the stature of its exalter.

If the same person should ask, What class of poetry is the highest? I should say, undoubtedly, the Epic; for it includes the drama, with narration besides; or the speaking and action of the characters, with the speaking of the poet himself, whose utmost address is taxed to relate all well for so long a time, particularly in the passages least sustained by enthusiasm. Whether this class has included the greatest poet, is another question still under trial; for Shakspeare perplexes all such verdicts, even when the claimant is Homer; though, if a judgment may be drawn from his early narratives (*Venus and Adonis*, and the

Rape of Lucrece), it is to be doubted whether even Shakspeare could have told a story like Homer, owing to that incessant activity and superfoetation of thought, a little less of which might be occasionally desired even in his plays ;—if it were possible, once possessing anything of his, to wish it away. Next to Homer and Shakspeare come such narrators as the less universal, but still intenser Dante; Milton, with his dignified imagination; the universal, profoundly simple Chaucer; and luxuriant, remote Spenser—immortal child in poetry's most poetic solitudes : then the great second-rate dramatists ; unless those who are better acquainted with Greek tragedy than I am, demand a place for them before Chaucer : then the airy yet robust universality of Ariosto ; the hearty, out-of-door nature of Theocritus, also a universalist ; the finest lyrical poets (who only take short flights, compared with the narrators) ; the purely contemplative poets who have more thought than feeling ; the descriptive, satirical, didactic, epigrammatic. It is to be borne in mind, however, that the first poet of an inferior class may be superior to followers in the train of a higher one, though the superiority is by no means to be taken for granted ; otherwise Pope would be superior to Fletcher, and Butler to Pope. Imagination, teeming with action and character, makes the greatest poets ; feeling and thought the next ; fancy (by itself) the next ; wit the last. Thought by itself makes no poet at all ; for the mere conclusions of the understanding can at best be only so many intellectual matters of fact. Feeling, even destitute of conscious thought, stands a far better poetical chance ; feeling being a sort of thought without the process of thinking,—a grasper of the truth without seeing it. And what is very remarkable, feeling seldom makes the blunders that thought does. An idle distinction has been made between taste and judgment. Taste is the very maker of judgment. Put an artificial fruit in your mouth, or only handle it, and you will soon perceive the difference between judging from taste or tact, and judging from the abstract figment called judgment. The latter does but throw you into guesses and doubts. Hence the conceits that astonish us in the gravest, and even subtlest thinkers, whose taste is not proportionate to their mental perceptions ; men like Donne, for instance ;

who, apart from accidental personal impressions, seem to look at nothing as it really is, but only as to what may be thought of it. Hence, on the other hand, the delightfulness of those poets who never violate truth of feeling, whether in things real or imaginary ; who are always consistent with their object and its requirements ; and who run the great round of nature, not to perplex and be perplexed, but to make themselves and us happy. And luckily, delightfulness is not incompatible with greatness, willing soever as men may be in their present imperfect state to set the power to subjugate above the power to please. Truth, of any great kind whatsoever, makes great writing. This is the reason why such poets as Ariosto, though not writing with a constant detail of thought and feeling like Dante, are justly considered great as well as delightful. Their greatness proves itself by the same truth of nature, and sustained power, though in a different way. Their action is not so crowded and weighty ; their sphere has more territories less fertile ; but it has enchantments of its own, which excess of thought would spoil,—luxuries, laughing graces, animal spirits ; and not to recognize the beauty and greatness of these, treated as they treat them, is simply to be defective in sympathy. Every planet is not Mars or Saturn. There is also Venus and Mercury. There is one genius of the south, and another of the north, and others uniting both. The reader who is too thoughtless or too sensitive to like intensity of any sort, and he who is too thoughtful or too dull to like anything but the greatest possible stimulus of reflection or passion, are equally wanting in complexional fitness for a thorough enjoyment of books. Ariosto occasionally says as fine things as Dante, and Spenser as Shakspeare ; but the business of both is to enjoy ; and in order to partake their enjoyment to its full extent, you must feel what poetry is in the general as well as the particular, must be aware that there are different songs of the spheres, some fuller of notes, and others of a sustained delight ; and as the former keep you perpetually alive to thought or passion, so from the latter you receive a constant harmonious sense of truth and beauty, more agreeable perhaps on the whole, though less exciting. Ariosto, for instance, does not *tell a story* with the brevity and concen-

trated passion of Dante ; every sentence is not so full of matter, nor the style so removed from the indifference of prose ; yet you are charmed with a truth of another sort, equally characteristic of the writer, equally drawn from nature, and substituting a healthy sense of enjoyment for intenser emotion. Exclusiveness of liking for this or that mode of truth, only shows, either that a reader's perceptions are limited, or that he would sacrifice truth itself to his favorite form of it. Sir Walter Raleigh, who was as tranchant with his pen as his sword, hailed the Faerie Queene of his friend Spenser in verses in which he said that "Petrarch" was thenceforward to be no more heard of ; and that in all English poetry, there was nothing he counted "of any price" but the effusions of the new author. Yet Petrarch is still living ; Chaucer was not abolished by Sir Walter ; and Shakspeare is thought somewhat valuable. A botanist might as well have said, that myrtles and oaks were to disappear, because acacias had come up. It is with the poet's creations, as with nature's, great or small. Wherever truth and beauty, whatever their amount, can be worthily shaped into verse, and answer to some demand for it in our hearts, there poetry is to be found ; whether in productions grand and beautiful as some great event, or some mighty, leafy solitude, or no bigger and more pretending than a sweet face or a bunch of violets ; whether in Homer's epic or Gray's Elegy, in the enchanted gardens of Ariosto and Spenser, or the very pot-herbs of the Schoolmistress of Shenstone, the balms of the simplicity of a cottage. Not to know and feel this, is to be deficient in the universality of Nature herself, who is a poetess on the smallest as well as the largest scale, and who calls upon us to admire all her productions : not indeed with the same degree of admiration, but with no refusal of it, except to defect.

I cannot draw this essay towards its conclusion better than with three memorable words of Milton ; who has said, that poetry, in comparison with science, is "simple, sensuous, and passionate." By simple, he means unperplexed and self-evident ; by sensuous, genial and full of imagery ; by passionate, excited and enthusiastic. I am aware that different constructions have been put on some of these words ; but the context seems to me

to necessitate those before us. I quote, however, not from the original, but from an extract in the Remarks on Paradise Lost by Richardson.

What the poet has to cultivate above all things is love and truth ;—what he has to avoid, like poison, is the fleeting and the false. He will get no good by proposing to be “in earnest at the moment.” His earnestness must be innate and habitual ; born with him, and felt to be his most precious inheritance. “I expect neither profit nor general fame by my writings,” says Coleridge, in the Preface to his Poems ; “and I consider myself as having been amply repaid without either. Poetry has been to me its ‘*own exceeding great reward* :’ it has soothed my afflictions ; it has multiplied and refined my enjoyments ; it has endeared solitude ; and it has given me the habit of wishing to discover the good and the beautiful in all that meets and surrounds me.”—*Pickering’s edition*, p. 10.

“Poetry,” says Shelley, “lifts the veil from the hidden beauty of the world, and makes familiar objects be as if they were not familiar. It reproduces all that it represents ; and the impersonations clothed in its Elysian light stand thenceforward in the minds of those who have once contemplated them, as memorials of that gentle and exalted content which extends itself over all thoughts and actions with which it co-exists. The great secret of morals is love, or a going out of our own nature, and an identification of ourselves with the beautiful which exists in thought, action, or person, not our own. A man, to be greatly good, must imagine intensely and comprehensively ; he must put himself in the place of another, and of many others : the pains and pleasures of his species must become his own. The great instrument of moral good is imagination ; and poetry administers to the effect by acting upon the cause.”—*Essays and Letters*, vol i., p. 16.

I would not willingly say anything after perorations like these ; but as treatises on poetry may chance to have auditors who think themselves called upon to vindicate the superiority of what is termed useful knowledge, it may be as well to add, that if the poet may be allowed to pique himself on any one thing more than another, compared with those who undervalue him,

it is on that power of undervaluing nobody, and no attainments different from his own, which is given him by the very faculty of imagination they despise. The greater includes the less. They do not see that their inability to comprehend him argues the smaller capacity. No man recognizes the worth of utility more than the poet : he only desires that the meaning of the term may not come short of its greatness, and exclude the noblest necessities of his fellow-creatures. He is quite as much pleased, for instance, with the facilities for rapid conveyance afforded him by the railroad, as the dullest confiner of its advantages to that single idea, or as the greatest two-ideal man who varies that single idea with hugging himself on his "buttons" or his good dinner. But he sees also the beauty of the country through which he passes, of the towns, of the heavens, of the steam-engine itself, thundering and fuming along like a magic horse, of the affections that are carrying, perhaps, half the passengers on their journey, nay, of those of the great two-ideal man ; and, beyond all this, he discerns the incalculable amount of good, and knowledge, and refinement, and mutual consideration, which this wonderful invention is fitted to circulate over the globe, perhaps to the displacement of war itself, and certainly to the diffusion of millions of enjoyments.

"And a button-maker, after all, invented it!" cries our friend.

Pardon me—it was a nobleman. A button-maker may be a very excellent, and a very poetical man, too, and yet not have been the first man visited by a sense of the gigantic powers of the combination of water and fire. It was a nobleman who first thought of this most poetical bit of science. It was a nobleman who first thought of it,—a captain who first tried it,—and a button-maker who perfected it. And he who put the nobleman on such thoughts, was the great philosopher, Bacon, who said that poetry had "something divine in it," and was necessary to the satisfaction of the human mind.

S P E N S E R ,

BORN, PROBABLY, ABOUT THE YEAR 1553—
DIED, 1598.

THREE things must be conceded to the objectors against this divine poet; first, that he wrote a good deal of allegory; second, that he has a great many superfluous words; third, that he was very fond of alliteration. He is accused also (by little boys) of obsolete words and spelling; and it must be added, that he often forces his rhymes; nay, spells them in an arbitrary manner on purpose to make them fit. In short, he has a variety of faults, real or supposed, that would be intolerable in writers in general. This is true. The answer is, that his genius not only makes amends for all, but overlays them, and makes them beautiful, with “riches fineless.” When acquaintance with him is once begun, he repels none but the anti-poetical. Others may not be able to read him continuously; but more or less, and as an enchanted stream “to dip into,” they will read him always.

In Spenser’s time, orthography was unsettled. Pronunciation is always so. The great poet, therefore, sometimes spells his words, whether rhymed or otherwise, in a manner apparently arbitrary, for the purpose of inducing the reader to give them the sound fittest for the sense. Alliteration, which, as a ground of melody, had been a principle in Anglo-Saxon verse, continued such a favorite with old English poets whom Spenser loved, that, as late as the reign of Edward the Third, it stood in the place of rhyme itself. Our author turns it to beautiful account. Superfluosity, though eschewed with a fine instinct by Chaucer in some of his latest works, where the narrative was fullest of action and character, abounded in his others; and, in spite of

the classics, it had not been recognized as a fault in Spenser's time, when books were still rare, and a writer thought himself bound to pour out all he felt and knew. It accorded also with his genius ; and in him is not an excess of weakness, but of will and luxury. And as to allegory, it was not only the taste of the day, originating in gorgeous pageants of church and state, but in Spenser's hands it became such an embodiment of poetry itself, that its objectors really deserve no better answer than has been given them by Mr. Hazlitt, who asks, if they thought the allegory would "bite them." The passage will be found a little further on.

Spenser's great characteristic is poetic luxury. If you go to him for a story, you will be disappointed ; if for a style, classical or concise, the point against him is conceded ; if for pathos, you must weep for personages half-real and too beautiful ; if for mirth, you must laugh out of good breeding, and because it pleaseth the great, sequestered man, to be facetious. But if you love poetry well enough to enjoy it for its own sake, let no evil reports of its "allegory" deter you from his acquaintance, for great will be your loss. His allegory itself is but one part allegory, and nine parts beauty and enjoyment ; sometimes an excess of flesh and blood. His forced rhymes, and his sentences written to fill up, which in a less poet would be intolerable, are accompanied with such endless grace and dreaming pleasure, fit to

• • Make heaven drowsy with the harmony,

that although it is to be no more expected of anybody to read him through at once, than to wander days and nights in a forest, thinking of nothing else, yet any true lover of poetry, when he comes to know him, would as soon quarrel with repose on the summer grass. You may get up and go away, but will return next day at noon to listen to his waterfalls, and to see, "with half-shut eye," his visions of knights and nymphs, his gods and goddesses, whom he brought down to earth in immortal beauty.

Spenser, in some respects, is more southern than the south itself. Dante, but for the covered heat which occasionally con-

centrates the utmost sweetness as well as venom, would be quite northern compared with him. He is more luxurious than Ariosto or Tasso, more haunted with the presence of beauty. His wholesale poetical belief, mixing up all creeds and mythologies, but with less violence, resembles that of Dante and Boccaccio; and it gives the compound the better warrant in the more agreeable impression. Then his versification is almost perpetual honey.

Spenser is the farthest removed from the ordinary cares and haunts of the world of all the poets that ever wrote, except perhaps Ovid; and this, which is the reason why mere men of business and the world do not like him, constitutes his most bewitching charm with the poetical. He is not so great a poet as Shakspeare or Dante;—he has less imagination, though more fancy, than Milton. He does not see things so purely in their elements as Dante; neither can he combine their elements like Shakspeare, nor bring such frequent intensities of words, or of wholesale imaginative sympathy, to bear upon his subject as any one of them; though he has given noble diffuser instances of the latter in his *Una*, and his *Mammon*, and his accounts of Jealousy and Despair.

But when you are “over-informed” with thought and passion in Shakspeare, when Milton’s mighty grandeurs oppress you, or are found mixed with painful absurdities, or when the world is vexatious and tiresome, and you have had enough of your own vanities or struggles in it, or when “house and land” themselves are “gone and spent,” and your riches must lie in the regions of the “unknown,” then Spenser is “most excellent.” His remoteness from every-day life is the reason perhaps why Somers and Chatham admired him; and his possession of every kind of imaginary wealth completes his charm with his brother poets. Take him in short for what he is, whether greater or less than his fellows, the poetical faculty is so abundantly and beautifully predominant in him above every other, though he had passion, and thought, and plenty of ethics, and was as learned a man as Ben Jonson, perhaps as Milton himself, that he has always been felt by his countrymen to be what Charles Lamb called him, the “Poet’s Poet.” He has had more idolatry and

imitation from his brethren than all the rest put together. The old undramatic poets, Drayton, Browne, Drummond, Giles and Phineas Fletcher, were as full of him as the dramatic were of Shakspeare. Milton studied and used him, calling him the "sage and serious Spenser;" and adding, that he "dared be known to think him a better teacher than Scotus or Aquinas." Cowley said that he became a poet by reading him. Dryden claimed him for a master. Pope said he read him with as much pleasure when he was old, as young. Collins and Gray loved him; Thomson, Shenstone, and a host of inferior writers, expressly imitated him; Burns, Byron, Shelley, and Keats made use of his stanza; Coleridge eulogized him; and he is as dear to the best living poets as he was to their predecessors. Spenser has stood all the changes in critical opinion; all the logical and formal conclusions of the understanding, as opposed to imagination and lasting sympathy. Hobbes in vain attempted to depose him in favor of Davenant's Gondibert. Locke and his friend Molyneux to no purpose preferred Blackmore! Hume, acute and encroaching philosopher as he was, but not so universal in his philosophy as great poets, hurt Spenser's reputation with none but the French (who did not know him); and, by way of involuntary amends for the endeavor, he set up for poets such men as Wilkie and Blacklock! In vain, in vain. "In spite of philosophy and fashion," says a better critic of that day (Bishop Hurd), "'Faerie Spenser' still ranks highest amongst the poets; I mean with all those who are either of that house, or have any kindness for it. Earth-born critics may blaspheme;

But all the *gods* are ravish'd with delight
Of his celestial song and music's wondrous might."

Remarks on the Plan and Conduct of the Faerie Queene (in Todd's edition of Spenser, vol. ii., p. 183).

"In reading Spenser," says Warton, "if the critic is not satisfied, yet the reader is transported." (Id., p. 65.)

"Spenser," observes Coleridge, "has the wit of the southern, with the deeper inwardness of the northern genius. Take especial note of the marvellous independence and true imaginative absence of all particular space or time in the *Faerie Queene*.

It is in the domains neither of history nor geography: it is ignorant of all artificial boundary, all material obstacles; it is truly in land of Faerie, that is, of mental space. The poet has placed you in a dream, a charmed sleep: and you neither wish nor have the power to inquire, where you are, or how you got there.” *Literary Remains*, vol. i., p. 94.

“In reading the Faerie Queene,” says Hazlitt, “you see a little withered old man by a wood-side opening a wicket, a giant, and a dwarf lagging far behind, a damsel in a boat upon an enchanted lake, wood-nymphs and satyrs: and all of a sudden you are transported into a lofty palace, with tapers burning, amidst knights and ladies, with dance and revelry, and song, ‘and mask and antique pageantry.’—But some people will say that all this may be very fine, but they cannot understand it on account of the allegory. They are afraid of the allegory, as if they thought it would bite them; they look at it as a child looks at a painted dragon, and think that it will strangle them in its shining folds. This is very idle. If they do not meddle with the allegory, the allegory will not meddle with them. Without minding it at all the whole is as plain as a pike-staff. It might as well be pretended, that we cannot see Poussin’s pictures for the allegory, as that the allegory prevents us from understanding Spenser.” *Lectures on the English Poets* (Templeman’s Edition, 12mo., p. 67).

ARCHIMAGO'S HERMITAGE,

AND

THE HOUSE OF MORPHEUS.

Archimago, a hypocritical magician, lures Una and the Red-cross Knight into his abode; and while they are asleep, sends to Morpheus, the god of sleep, for a false dream, to produce discord between them.

*A little lowly hermitage it was
Down in a dale, hard by a forest's side,
Far from resort of people, that did pass
In travel to and fro: a little wide
There was a holy chapel edified,
Wherein the hermit duly wont to say
His holy things each morn and eventide;
Thereby a crystal stream did gently play
Which from a sacred fountain wellèd forth alway.¹*

Arrivèd there the little house they fill,²
Nor look for entertainment where none was,³
Rest is their feast, and all things at their will.
The noblest mind the best contentment has.⁴
With fair discourse the evening so they pass,
For that old man of pleasing words had store,
And well could file his tongue as smooth as glass:
He told of saints and popes, *and evermore*
He strew'd an Ave Mary, after and before.

The drooping night thus creepeth on them fast;
And the sad humor, *loading their eye-lids*,
As messenger of Morpheus, on them cast
Sweet slumbering dew; the which to sleep them bids
Unto their lodgings then his guests he rids;
Where, when all drown'd in deadly sleep he finds,
He to his study goes, and their amids'
His magic books and arts of sundry kinds,
He seeks out mighty charms to trouble sleepy minds.

Then choosing out few words most horrible
*(Let none them read !)*⁵ thereof did verses frame,
 With which, and other spells like terrible,
 He bad awake black Pluto's grisly dame,
 And cursèd Heaven ; and spake reproachful shame
 Of highest God, the Lord of life and light :
A bold bad man, that dar'd to call by name
 Great Gorgon,⁶ prince of darkness and dead night ;
 At which Cocytus quakes, and Styx is put to flight.

And forth he call'd out of deep darkness dread
 Legions of sprites, the which, like little flies,⁷
Fluttering about his ever damned head,
 Await where to their service he applies,
 To aid his friends, or fray his enemies ;
 Of those he chose out two, the falsest two
 And fittest for to forge true-seeming lies ;
 The one of them he gave a message to,
 The other by himself staid other work to do

He maketh speedy way through spersèd air,
*And through the world of waters wide and deep,*⁸
 To Morpheus' house doth hastily repair.—⁹
 Amid the bowels of the earth full steep,
 And low, where dawning day doth never peep,
 His dwelling is ; *there Tethys his wet bed*
Doth ever wash, and Cynthia still doth steep
 In silver dew his ever-drooping head,
 While sad night over him her mantle black doth spread

Whose double gates he findeth lockèd fast ;
 The one fair fram'd of burnish'd ivory,
 The other all with silver overcast ;
 And wakeful dogs before them *far do lie*,
 Watching to banish Care their enemy,
 Who oft is wont to trouble gentle Sleep,
 By them the sprite doth pass in quietly
 And unto Morpheus comes, whom drownèd deep
 In drowsy fit he finds ; of nothing he takes keep.

And more to lull him in his slumber soft,
A trickling stream, from high rock tumbling down,
And ever drizzling rain upon the loft,
Mix'd with a murmuring wind, much like the soun
Of swarming bees, did cast him in a swoon :

*No other noise, nor people's troublous cries,
As still are wont t' annoy the wallèd town,
Might there be heard ; but careless Quiet lies,
Wrapt in eternal silence, far from enemies.¹⁰*

The messenger approaching to him spake
But his waste words return'd to him in vain
So sound he slept, that naught might him awake.
Then rudely he him thrust, and push'd with pain,
Whereat he 'gan to stretch : but he again
Shook him so hard, that forcèd him to speak
As one then in a dream, whose drier brain
Is lost with troubled sights and fancies weak,
He mumbled soft, but would not all his silence break.

The sprite then 'gan more boldly him to wake,
And threaten'd unto him the dreaded name
Of Hecaté : whereat he 'gan to quake,
And lifting up his lumpish head, with blame
Half angry askèd him, for what he came.
" Hither," quoth he, " me Archimago sent :
He that the stubborn sprites can wisely tame ;
He bids thee to him send for his intent
A fit false dream, that can delude the sleeper's sent."¹¹

The god obeyed ; and calling forth straightway
A divers dream¹² out of his prison dark,
Deliver'd it to him, and down did lay
His heavy head, devoid of careful cark ;
Whose senses all were straight benumb'd and stark.
He, back returning by the ivory door,
Remounted up as light as cheerful lark ;
And on his little wings the dream he bore
In haste unto his lord, where he him left afore.

¹ *Wellèd forth alway.*

The modulation of this charming stanza is exquisite. Let us divide it into its pauses, and see what we have been hearing :—

A little lowly hermitage it was |
Down in a dale, | hard by a forest's side, |
Far from resort of people | that did pass
In travel to and fro : | a little wide |

There was a holy chapel edified, |
 Wherein the hermit duly wont to say
 His holy things | each morn and eventide ;
 Thereby a crystal stream did gently play |
 Which from a sacred fountain wellèd forth alway.

Mark the variety of pauses, of the accentuation of the syllables and of the intonation of the vowels; all closing in that exquisite last line, as soft and continuous as the water it describes. The repetition of the words *little* and *holy* add to the sacred snugness of the abode. We are to fancy the little tenement on the skirts of a forest, that is to say, within, but not deeply within, the trees; the chapel is near it, but not close to it, more embowered; and the rivulet may be supposed to circuit both chapel and hermitage, running partly under the trees between mossy and flowery banks, for hermits were great cullers of simples; and though Archimago was a false hermit, we are to suppose him living in a true hermitage. It is one of those pictures which remain for ever in the memory; and the succeeding stanza is worthy of it.

² *Arrived there the little house they fill.*

Not literally the *house*, but the apartment as a specimen of the house; for we see by what follows that the hermitage must have contained at least four rooms; one in which the knight and the lady were introduced, two more for their bed-chambers, and a fourth for the magician's study.

³ *Nor look for entertainment where none was.*

“Entertainment” is here used in the restricted sense of treatment as regards food and accommodation; according to the old inscription over inn-doors—“Entertainment for man and horse.”

⁴ *The noblest mind the best contentment has.*

This is one of Spenser's many noble sentiments expressed in as noble single lines, as if made to be recorded in the copy-books

of full-grown memories. As, for example, one which he is fond of repeating :—

No service loathsome to a gentle kind.
Entire affection scorneth nicer hands.
True love loathes disdainful nicety.

And that fine Alexandrine,—

Weak body well is chang'd for mind's redoubled force.

And another, which Milton has imitated in Comus—

Virtue gives herself light in darkness for to wade.

⁵ “*Let none them read.*”—As if we could ! And yet while we smile at the impossibility, we delight in this solemn injunction of the Poet’s, so child-like, and full of the imaginative sense of the truth of what he is saying.

⁶ *A bold bad man that dared to call by name
Great Gorgon.*

This is the ineffable personage, whom Milton, with a propriety equally classical and poetical, designates as

The dreaded name
Of Demogorgan.
Par. Lost, Book ii., v. 965.

Ancient believers apprehended such dreadful consequences from the mention of him, that his worst and most potent invokers are represented as fearful of it; nor am I aware that any poet, Greek or Latin, has done it, though learned commentators on Spenser imply otherwise. In the passages they allude to, in Lucan and Statius, there is no name uttered. The adjuration is always made by a periphrasis. This circumstance is noticed by Boccaccio, who has given by far the best, and indeed, I believe, the only account of this very rare god, except what is abridged from his pages in a modern Italian mythology, and furnished by his own authorities, Lactantius and Theodontus, the latter an author now lost. Ben Jonson calls him “Boccaccio’s Demogorgan.” The passage is in the first book of his *Genea-*

logia Deorum, a work of prodigious erudition for that age, and full of the gusto of a man of genius. According to Boccaccio, Demogorgon (*Spirit Earthworker*) was the great deity of the rustic Arcadians, and the creator of all things out of brute matter. He describes him as a pale and sordid-looking wretch, inhabiting the centre of the earth, all over moss and dirt, squalidly wet, and emitting an earthy smell ; and he laughs at the credulity of the ancients in thinking to make a god of such a fellow. He is very glad, however, to talk about him ; and doubtless had a lurking respect for him, inasmuch as mud and dirt are among the elements of things material, and therefore partake of a certain mystery and divineness.

⁷ *Legions of sprites, the which like little flies.*

Flies are old embodiments of evil spirits ;—Anacreon forbids us to call them incarnations, in reminding us that insects are fleshless and bloodless, *αραιμοσταχα*. Beelzebub signifies the Lord of Flies.

⁸ *The world of waters wide and deep.*

How complete a sense of the ocean under one of its aspects ! Spenser had often been at sea, and his pictures of it, or in connexion with it, are frequent and fine accordingly, superior perhaps to those of any other English poet, Milton certainly, except in that one famous imaginative passage in which he describes a fleet at a distance as seeming to “hang in the clouds.” And Shakspeare throws himself wonderfully into a storm at sea, as if he had been in the thick of it ; though it is not known that he ever quitted the land. But nobody talks so much about the sea, or its inhabitants, or its voyagers, as Spenser. He was well acquainted with the Irish Channel. Coleridge observes, (*ut sup.*) that “one of Spenser’s arts is that of alliteration, which he uses with great effect in doubling the impression of an image.” The verse above noticed is a beautiful example.

⁹ *To Morpheus’ house doth hastily repair, &c.*

Spenser’s earth is not the Homeric earth, a circular flat, or disc,

studded with mountains, and encompassed with the “ocean stream.” Neither is it in all cases a globe. We must take his cosmography as we find, and as he wants it; that is to say, poetically, and according to the feeling required by the matter in hand. In the present instance, we are to suppose a precipitous country striking gloomily and far downwards to a cavernous sea-shore, in which the bed of Morpheus is placed, the ends of its curtains dipping and fluctuating in the water, which reaches it from underground. The door is towards a flat on the land-side, with dogs lying “far before it;” and the moonbeams reach it, though the sun never does. The passage is imitated from Ovid (Lib. ii., ver. 592), but with wonderful concentration, and superior *home* appeal to the imagination. Ovid will have no dogs, nor any sound at all but that of Lethe rippling over its pebbles. Spenser has dogs, but afar off, and a lulling sound overhead of wind and rain. These are the sounds that men delight to hear in the intervals of their own sleep.

¹⁰ *Wrapt in eternal silence, far from enemies.*

The modulation of this most beautiful stanza (perfect, except for the word *tumbling*) is equal to that of the one describing the hermitage, and not the less so for being less varied both in pauses and in vowels, the subject demanding a greater monotony. A poetical reader need hardly be told, that he should humor such verses with a corresponding tone in the recital. Indeed it is difficult to read them without lowering or deepening the voice, as though we were going to bed ourselves, or thinking of the rainy night that lulled us. A long rest at the happy pause in the last line, and then a strong accent on the word *far*, put us in possession of all the remoteness of the scene;—and it is improved, if we make a similar pause at *heard*:

No other noise, or people’s troublous cries,
As still are wont to annoy the wallèd town,
Might there be heard;—but careless quiet lies,
Wrapt in eternal silence,—*far* from enemies.

Upton, one of Spenser’s commentators, in reference to the

trickling stream, has quoted in his note on this passage some fine lines from Chaucer, in which, describing the “dark valley” of Sleep, the poet says there was nothing whatsoever in the place, save that,

A few wells
Came running fro the clyffes adowne,
That made a deadly sleeping sowne.

Sowne (in the old spelling) is also Spenser’s word. In the text of the present volume it is written *soun’*, to show that it is the same as the word *sound* without the *d*;—like the French and Italian, *son*, *suono*.

“ ‘Tis hardly possible,” says Upton, “for a more picturesque description to come from a poet or a painter than this whole magical scene.”—See *Todd’s Variorum Spenser*, vol. ii., p. 38.

Meantime, the magician has been moulding a shape of air to represent the virtuous mistress of the knight; and when the dream arrives, he sends them both to deceive him, the one sitting by his head and abusing “the organs of his fancy” (as Milton says of the devil with Eve), and the other behaving in a manner very unlike her prototype. The delusion succeeds for a time.

¹¹ *A fit false dream that can delude the sleeper’s sent.*

Scent, sensation, perception. Skinner says that *sent*, which we falsely write *scent*, is derived *a sentiendo*. The word is thus frequently spelt by Spenser.—TODD.

²¹ *“A diverse dream.”*—“A dream,” says Upton, “that would occasion diversity or distraction; or a frightful, hideous dream, from the Italian, *sogno diverso*.”—Dante, *Inferno*, canto vi.

Cerbero, fiera crudele e *diversa*.

(Cerberus, the fierce beast, cruel and diverse.)

Inferno, *Orlando Innamorato*, Lib. i., canto 4, stanza 66.

Un grido orribile e *diverso*.

(There rose a cry, horrible and diverse), &c.

See Todd’s Edition, as above, p. 42.

The obvious sense, however, as in the case of Dante's Cerberus, I take to be *monstrously varied*,—inconsistent with itself. The dream is to make the knight's mistress contradict her natural character.

THE CAVE OF MAMMON

AND

GARDEN OF PROSERPINE.

Sir Guyon, crossing a desert, finds Mammon sitting amidst his gold in a gloomy valley. Mammon, taking him down into his cave, tempts him with the treasures there, and also with those in the Garden of Proserpine

“Spenser’s strength,” says Hazlitt, “is not strength of will or action, of bone and muscle, nor is it coarse and palpable; but it assumes a character of vastness and sublimity seen through the same visionary medium” (he has just been alluding to one), and blended with the appalling associations of preternatural agency. We need only turn in proof of this to the Cave of Despair, or the *Cave of Mammon*, or to the account of the change of Malbecco into Jealousy.”—*Lectures*, p. 77.

THAT house’s form within was rude and strong,¹³
Like a huge cave hewn out of rocky clift,
From whose rough vault the ragged branches hung
Emboss with massy gold of glorious gift,
And with rich metal loaded every rift,
That heavy ruin they did seem to threat;
And over them Arachne high did lift
Her cunning web, and spread her subtle net,
Enwrappèd in foul smoke, and clouds more black than jet.

Both roof and floor, and walls were all of gold,
But overgrown with dust and old decay,
And hid in darkness, that none could behold
The hue thereof; for view of cheerful day
Did never in that house itself display,

*But a faint shadow of uncertain light ;
Such as a lamp, whose life does fade away ;
Or as the moon, clothèd with cloudy night,
Does show to him that walks in fear and sad affright.*

In all that room was nothing to be seen,
But huge great iron chests and coffers strong,
All barr'd with double bands, that none could ween
Them to enforce by violence or wrong ;
On every side they placèd were along ;
But all the ground with skulls was scatterèd,
And dead men's bones, which round about were flung,
Whose lives (it seemèd) whilome there were shed,
And their vile carcases now left unburièd.

They forward pass, nor Guyon yet spake word,
Till that they came unto an iron door,
Which to them open'd of its own accord,
And show'd of riches such exceeding store,
As eye of man did never see before,
Nor ever could within one place be found,
Though all the wealth which is, or was of yore,
Could gathered be through all the world around,
And that above were added to that under ground.

The charge thereof unto a covetous sprite
Commanded was, who thereby did attend,
And warily awaited, day and night,
From other covetous fiends it to defend,
Who it to rob and ransack did intend.
Then Mammon turning to that warrior, said :
“ Lo here the worldè's bliss ! lo here the end,
To which all men do aim, rich to be made !
Such grace now to be happy is before thee laid.”

“ Certes ” (said he) “ I n'll thine offered grace,¹⁴
Nor to be made so happy do intend ;
Another bliss before mine eyes I place,
Another happiness, another end :
To them that list, these base regards I lend ;
But I in arms, and in achievements brave,
Do rather choose my fitting hours to spend,
And to be lord of those that riches have,
Than them to have myself, and be their servile slave

* * * *

¹⁴ N'll, *ne-will*, will not.

The Knight is led further on, and shown more treasures, and afterwards taken into the palace of Ambition ; but all in vain.

Mammon emmovèd was with inward wrath ;
 Yet forcing it to fain, him forth thence led,
 Through griesly shadows, by a beaten path,
 Into a garden goodly garnishèd
 With herbs and fruits, whose kinds must not be read :
 Not such as earth, out of her fruitful womb,¹⁵
 Throws forth to men, sweet and well-savorèd,
But direful deadly black, both leaf and bloom,
 Fit to adorn the dead and deck the dreary tomb.

There mournful cypress grew in greatest store ;¹⁶
 And trees of bitter gall ; and heben sad ;
 Dead sleeping poppy : and black hellebore ;
Cold coloquintida ; and tetra *mad* ;
 Mortal samnitis ; and cicuta bad,
 With which the unjust Athenians made to die
 Wise Socrates, who therefore quaffing glad
Pour'd out his life and *last philosophy*
 To the fair Critias, his dearest belamy !

The garden of Proserpina this hight ;¹⁷
And in the midst thereof a silver seat,
With a thick arbor goodly over-dight,
 In which she often us'd from open heat
 Herself to shroud, and pleasures to entreat :
 Next thereunto did grow a goodly tree,
 With branches broad disspread and body great,
Clothed with leaves, that none the wood might see,
And loaded all with fruit as thick as it might be.

Their fruit were golden apples, glistening bright,
 That goodly was their glory to behold ;
 On earth like never grew, nor living wight
 Like ever saw, but they from hence were sold ;¹⁸
 For those, which Hercules with conquest bold
 Got from great Atlas' daughters, hence began,
 And planted there did bring forth fruit of gold ;
 And those, with which th' Eubean young man wan
 Swift Atalanta, when through craft he her out-ran.

Here also sprung that goodly golden fruit,
 With which Acontius got his lover true,
 Whom he had long time sought with fruitless suit ;
 Here eke that famous golden apple grew,
 The which amongst the gods false Até threw ;
 For which *the Idæan ladies* disagreed,¹⁹
 Till partial Paris deem'd it Venus' due,
 And had of her fair Helen for his meed,
 That many noble Greeks and Trojans made to bleed.

The warlike elf much wonder'd at this tree
So fair and great, that shadowed all the ground ;
And his broad branches, laden with rich fee,
Did stretch themselves without the utmost bound
Of this great garden, compass'd with a mound,
Which overhanging, they themselves did steep
In a black flood, which flow'd about it round.²⁰
That is the river of Cocytus deep,
 In which full many souls do endless wail and weep.

Which to behold, he climb'd up to the bank ;
 And, looking down, saw many damnèd wights
 In those sad waves which direfull deadly stank,²¹
 Plungèd continually of cruel sprites,
 That with their piteous cries and yelling shrights
 They made the further shore resounden wide.
 Amongst the rest of those same rueful sights,
 One cursèd creature he by chance espied,
That drenchèd lay full deep under the garden side.

Deep was he drenchèd to the utmost chin,
 Yet gapèd still as coveting to drink
 Of the cold liquor which he waded in :
 And, stretching forth his hand, did often think
 To reach the food which grew upon the brink ;
 But both *the fruit from hand* and *flood from mouth*
 Did fly aback, and made him vainly swinck,
 The whiles he starv'd with hunger and with drought :
He daily died, yet never thoroughly dyen couth.²²

The knight, him seeing labor so in vain,
 Ask'd who he was, and what he meant thereto !
 Who groaning deep, thus answered him again ;
 " Most cursed of all creatures under sky,
 Lo ! Tantalus, I here tormented lie !
 Of whom high Jove wont whilom feasted be !
 Lo ! here I now for want of food do die !

But, if that thou be such as I thee see,
Of grace I pray thee give to eat and drink to me!"

" Nay, nay, *thou greedy Tantalus,*" quoth he ;
" Abide the fortune of thy present fate ;
And unto all that live in high degree,
Example be of mind intemperate,
To teach them how to use their present state." Then 'gan the cursed wretch aloud to cry,
Accusing highest Jove and gods ingrate :
And eke blaspheming Heaven bitterly,
As author of injustice, there to let him die.

He look'd a little further, and espied
Another wretch whose carcase deep was drent
Within the river which the same did hide :
But both his hands, most filthy feculent,
Above the water were on high extent,
And fain'd to wash themselves incessantly,
Yet nothing cleaner were for such intent,
But rather fouler seem'd to the eye ;
So lost his labor vain, and idle industry.

The knight him calling, ask'd who he was ?
Who, lifting up his head, him answered thus :
" I Pilate am,²³ the falsest judge, alas !
And most unjust ; that, by unrighteous
And wicked doom, to Jews despiteous
Delivered up the Lord of Life to die,
And did acquit a murderer felonous ;
The whilst my hands I wash'd in purity ;
The whilst my soul was soil'd with foul iniquity."

Infinite more tormented in like pain
He then beheld, too long here to be told :
Nor Mammon would there let him long remain,
For terror of the tortures manifold,
In which the damnèd souls he did behold,
But roughly him bespake : " Thou fearful fool,
Why takest not of that same fruit of gold ;
Nor sittest down on that same silver stool,
To rest thy weary person in the shady cool ?"

All which he did to do him deadly fall
In frail intemperance through sinful bait ;
To which if he inclinèd had at all,

That dreadful fiend, which did behind him wait,
Would him have rent in thousand pieces straight:
But he was wary wise in all his way,
And well perceivèd his deceitful sleight,
Nor sufferèd lust his safety to betray :
So goodly did beguile the guiler of his prey.

And now he has so long remainèd there,
That vital power 'gan wax both weak and wan
For want of food and sleep, which two upbear,
Like mighty pillars, this frail life of man,
That none without the same enduren can ;
For now three days of men were full outwrought,
Since he this hardy enterprise began :
Therefore great Mammon fairly he besought
Into the world to guide him back, as he him brought.

The god, though loth, yet was constrain'd t' obey ,
For longer time than that no living wight
Below the earth might suffered be to stay :
So back again him brought to living light.
But all as soon as his enfeebled sprite
'Gan suck this vital air into his breast,
As overcome with too exceeding might,
The life did flit away out of her nest,
And all his senses were in deadly fit opprest.

¹³ *That house's form within was rude and strong, &c.*

Hazlitt, with his fine poetical taste, speaking of the two stanzas here following, and the previous one beginning, *And over all, &c.*, says, that they are unrivalled for the “ portentous massiveness of the forms, the splendid chiaroscuro and shadowy horror,”—“ *Lectures on the English Poets*,” third edition, p. 77. It is extraordinary that in the new “ *Elegant Extracts*,” published under his name, seven lines of the first stanza, beginning at the words, “ from whose rough vault,” are left out. Their exceeding weight, the contrast of the dirt and squalor with the gold, and the spider’s webs dusking over all, compose chief part of the grandeur of the description (as indeed he has just said). Hogarth, by the way, has hit upon the same thought of a spider’s web for his poor’s-box, in the wedding-scene in *Mary-le-bone church*. So do tragedy and comedy meet.

¹⁵ “ *Not such as earth*,” &c.—Upton thinks it not unlikely that

Spenser imagined the direful deadly and black fruits which this infernal garden bears, from a like garden which Dante describes, *Inferno*, canto xiii., v. 4.

Non frondi verdi, ma di color fosco,
Non rami schietti, ma nodosi e'nvolti,
Non pomi v' eran, ma stecchi con tosco.

(No leaves of green were theirs, but dusky sad ;
No fair straight boughs, but gnarl'd and tangled all :
No rounded fruits, but poison-bearing thorns.)

Dante's garden, however, has no flowers. It is a *human grove*; that is to say, made of trees that were once human beings,—an aggravation (according to his customary improvement upon horrors) of a like solitary instance in Virgil, which Spenser has also imitated in his story of *Fradubio*, book i., canto 2, st. 30.

¹⁶ *There mournful cypress grew in greatest store, &c.*

Among the trees and flowers here mentioned, *heben*, is ebony; *coloquintida*, the bitter gourd or apple; *tetra*, the *tetrum solanum*, or deadly night-shade; *samnitis*, Upton takes to be the Sabine, or savine-tree; and *cicuta* is the hemlock, which Socrates drank when he poured out to his friends his “last philosophy.” How beautifully said is that! But the commentators have shown that it was a slip of memory in the poet to make Critias their representative on the occasion,—that apostate from his philosophy not having been present. *Belamy* is *bel ami*, fair friend,—a phrase answering to *good friend*, in the old French writers.

¹⁷ *The garden of Proserpina this hight.*

The idea of a garden and a golden tree for Proserpina is in Claudian, *De Raptu Proserpinae*, lib. ii., v. 290. But Spenser has made the flowers funereal, and added the “silver seat,”—a strong yet still delicate contrast to the black flowers, and in cold sympathy with them. It has also a certain fair and lady-like fitness to the possessor of the arbor. May I venture, with all reverence to Spenser, to express a wish that he had made a

compromise with the flowers of Claudian, and retained them by the side of the others? Proserpine was an unwilling bride, though she became a reconciled wife. She deserved to enjoy her Sicilian flowers ; and besides, in possessing a nature superior to her position, she would not be without innocent and cheerful thoughts. Perhaps, however, our “ sage and serious Spenser” would have answered, that she could see into what was good in these evil flowers, and so get a contentment from objects which appeared only melancholy to others. It is certainly a high instance of modern imagination, this venturing to make a pleasure-garden out of the flowers of pain.

¹⁸ “*But they from hence were sold.*”—Upton proposes that “with a little variation,” this word *sold* should be read *stold*; “that is,” says he, “procured by stealth:”—he does not like to say stolen. “The wise *convey* it call.” Spenser certainly would have no objection to spell the word in any way most convenient; and I confess I wish, with Upton, that he had exercised his licence in this instance; though he might have argued, that the infernal powers are not in the habit of letting people have their goods for nothing. In how few of the instances that follow did the possession of the golden apples turn out well! Are we sure that it prospered in any? For Acontius succeeded with *his* apple by a trick; and after all, as the same commentator observes, it was not with a golden apple, but common mortal-looking fruit, though gathered in the garden of Venus. He wrote a promise upon it to marry him, and so his mistress read, and betrothed herself. The story is in Ovid: *Heroides*, *Epist.* xx., xxi.

¹⁹ *For which the Idæan ladies disagreed.*

“He calls the three goddesses that contended for the prize of beauty, boldly but elegantly enough, *Idæan Ladies.*”—JORTIN. “He calls the Muses and the Graces likewise, *Ladies.*”—CHURCH. “The ladies may be further gratified by Milton’s adaptation of their title to the celebrated daughters of Hesperus, whom he calls *Ladies* of the *Hesperides.*”—TODD. The ladies of the present day, in which so much good poetry and reading have revived, will smile at the vindication of a word

again become common, and so frequent in the old poets and romancers.

²⁰ *Which overhanging, they themselves did steep
In a black flood, which flowed about it round, &c.*

The tree, observe, grew in the middle of “this great garden,” and yet overhung its utmost bounds, and steeped itself in the black river by which it was encircled. We are to imagine the branches with their fruit stretching over the garden like one enormous arbor or trellise, and mixing a certain lustrous light with the gloom and the funereal flowers. You walk in the shadow of a golden death. What an excessive and gorgeous luxury beside the blackness of hell !

²¹ *And looking down saw many damned wights
In those sad waves which direful deadly stank,
Plungèd continually of cruel sprites,
That with their piteous cries, &c.*

Virgil appears to have been the first who ventured to find sublimity in a loathsome odor. I say “appears,” because many Greek writers have perished whom he copied, and it is probable the invention was theirs. A greater genius, Dante, followed him in this, as in other respects ; and, probably, would have set the example had it not been given him. Sackville followed both ; and the very excess of Spenser’s sense of the beautiful and attractive would render him fully aware of the capabilities of this intensity of the repulsive. Burke notices the subject in his treatise *On the Sublime and Beautiful*. The following is the conclusion of his remarks :—“It is one of the tests by which the sublimity of an image is to be tried, not whether it becomes mean when associated with mean ideas, but whether, when united with images of an allowed grandeur, the whole composition is supported with dignity. Things which are terrible are always great ; but when things possess disagreeable qualities, or such as have indeed some degree of danger, but of a danger easily overcome, they are merely odious, as toads and spiders.”—*Part the Second, Section the Twenty-first.* Both points

are easily illustrated. Passing by a foul ditch, you are simply disgusted, and turn aside; but imagine yourself crossing a mountain, and coming upon a hot and slimy valley in which a pestilential vapor ascends from a city, the inhabitants of which have died of the plague and been left unburied; or fancy the great basin of the Caspian Sea deprived of its waters, and the horror which their refuse would send up over the neighboring regions.

²² *He daily died, yet never thoroughly dyen couth.*

Die could; he never could thoroughly die. Truly horrible; and, as Swift says of his hanging footman, "very satisfactory to the beholders." Yet Spenser's Tantalus, and his Pontius Pilate, and indeed the whole of this latter part of his hell, strike us with but a poor sort of cruelty compared with any like number of pages out of the tremendous volume of Dante. But the far greater part of our extract, the sooty golden cave of Mammon, and the mortal beauty of the garden of Proserpine, with its golden fruit hanging in the twilight; all, in short, in which Spenser combines his usual luxury with grandeur, are as fine as anything of the kind which Dante or any one else ever conceived.

²³ "*I Pilate am,*" &c. Let it not be supposed that I intend the slightest glance of levity towards the divine name which has become identified with charity. But charity itself will allow us to imagine the astonishment of this Roman Governor of Jerusalem, could he have foreseen the destinies of *his* name. He doubtless thought, that if another age spoke of him at all, it would treat him as a good-natured man who had to rule over a barbarous people, and make a compromise between his better judgment and their prejudices. No name, except Judas's, has received more execration from posterity. Our good-natured poet has here put him in the "loathly lakes" of Tartarus.

A GALLERY OF PICTURES FROM SPENSER.

SPENSER CONSIDERED AS THE POET OF THE PAINTERS.

It has been a whim of late years with some transcendental critics, in the excess of the reaction of what may be called spiritual poetry against material, to deny utterly the old family relationship between poetry and painting. They seem to think that because Darwin absurdly pronounced nothing to be poetry which could not be painted, they had only to avail themselves of the spiritual superiority of the art of the poet, and assert the contrary extreme. Now, it is granted that the subtlest creations of poetry are neither effected by a painter-like process, nor limited to his powers of suggestion. The finest idea the poet gives you of anything is by what may be called sleight of mind, striking it without particular description on the mind of the reader, feeling and all, moral as well as physical, as a face is struck on a mirror. But to say, nevertheless, that the poet does not include the painter in his more visible creations, is to deprive him of half his privileges, nay, of half his very poems. Thousands of images start out of the *canvass* of his pages to laugh at the assertion. Where did the great Italian painters get half of the most bodily details of their subjects but out of the poets? and what becomes of a thousand landscapes, portraits, colors, lights and shades, groupings, effects, intentional and artistical pictures, in the writings of all the poets inclusive, the greatest especially?

I have taken opportunity of this manifest truth to introduce under one head a variety of the most beautiful passages in Spenser, many of which might otherwise have seemed too small for separate exhibition; and I am sure that the more poetical the reader, the more will he be delighted to see these manifestations of the pictorial side of poetry. He will not

find them destitute of that subtler spirit of the art, which picture cannot express.

"After reading," said Pope, "a canto of Spenser two or three days ago to an old lady, between seventy and eighty years of age, she said that I had been showing her a gallery of pictures. I don't know how it is, but she said very right. There is something in Spenser that pleases one as strongly in old age as it did in one's youth. I read the *Faërie Queene*, when I was about twelve, with infinite delight; and I think it gave me as much, when I read it over about a year or two ago."—*Spence's Anecdotes*.

The canto that Pope here speaks of was probably one of the most allegorical sort, very likely that containing the *Mask of Cupid*. In the one preceding it, there is a professed gallery of pictures, supposed to be painted on tapestry. But Spenser's allegorical pictures are only his most obvious ones: he has a profusion of others, many of them still more exquisitely painted. I think that if he had not been a great poet, he would have been a great painter; and in that case there is ground for believing that England would have possessed, and in the person of one man, her Claude, her Annibal Caracci, her Correggio, her Titian, her Rembrandt, perhaps even her Raphael. I suspect that if Spenser's history were better known, we should find that he was a passionate student of pictures, a haunter of the collections of his friends Essex and Leicester. The tapestry just alluded to, he criticises with all the gusto of a connoisseur, perhaps with an eye to pictures in those very collections. In speaking of a Leda, he says, bursting into an admiration of the imaginary painter,

O, wondrous skill *and sweet wit of the man,*
That her in daffodillies sleeping made,
From scorching heat her dainty limbs to shade!

And then he proceeds with a description full of life and beauty, but more proper to be read with the context than brought forward separately. The coloring implied in these lines is in the very core of the secret of that branch of the art; and the un-

painted part of the tapestry is described with hardly less beauty.

For, round about, the walls y clothèd were
With goodly arras of great majesty,
Woven with gold and silk so close and near,
That the rich metal lurkèd privily,
As feigning to be hid from envious eye ;
Yet here, and there, and everywhere, unwares
It show'd itself, and shone unwillingly ;
Like to a discolor'd snake, whose hidden snares
Through the green grass his long bright burnish'd back declares.

Spenser should have a new set of commentators,—the painters themselves. They might do for him in their own art, what Warton did in his,—trace him among his *brethren*. Certainly no works would “illustrate” better than Spenser’s with engravings from the old masters (I should like no better amusement than to hunt him through the print-shops !), and from none might a better gallery be painted by new ones. I once wrote an article on the subject in a magazine ; and the late Mr. Hilton (I do not know whether he saw it) projected such a gallery, among his other meritorious endeavors. It did not answer to the originals, either in strength or sweetness ; but a very creditable and pleasing specimen may be seen in the National Gallery,—*Serena rescued from the Savages by Sir Calepine*.

In corroboration of the delight which Spenser took in this more visible kind of poetry, it is observable that he is never more free from his superfluousness than when painting a picture. When he gets into a moral, or intellectual, or narrative vein, we might often spare him a good deal of the flow of it ; but on occasions of sheer poetry and painting, he is too happy to wander so much from his point. If he is tempted to expatiate, every word is to the purpose. Poetry and painting indeed would in Spenser be identical, if they could be so ; and they are more so, too, than it has latterly been the fashion to allow ; for painting does not deal in the purely visible. It deals also in the suggestive and the allusive, therefore in thoughts beyond the visible proof of the canvass ; in intimations of sound ; in references to the past and future. Still the medium is a visible one, and is at the mercy of

the spectator's amount of comprehension. The great privilege of the poet is, that, using the medium of speech, he can make his readers poets; can make them aware and possessed of what he intends, enlarging their comprehension by his details, or enlightening it by a word. A painter might have the same feeling as Shakspeare respecting the moonlight "sleeping" on a bank; but how is he to evince it? He may go through a train of the profoundest thoughts in his own mind; but into what voluminous fairy circle is he to compress them? Poetry can paint whole galleries in a page, while her sister art requires heaps of canvass to render a few of her poems visible.

This, however, is what everybody knows. Not so, that Spenser emulated the Raphaels and Titians in a profusion of pictures, many of which are here *taken from their walls*. They give the Poet's Poet a claim to a new title,—that of Poet of the Painters. The reader has seen what Mr. Hazlitt says of him in connection with Rubens; but the passage adds, what I have delayed quoting till now, that "none but Rubens could have painted the fancy of Spenser;" adding further, that Rubens "could not have painted the sentiment, the airy dream that hovers over it." I venture to think that this fine critic on the two sister arts wrote the first of these sentences hastily; and that the truth of the second would have shown him, on reflection, with what painters, greater than Rubens, the poet ought to have been compared. The great Fleming was a man of a genius as fine and liberal as his nature; yet who that looks for a moment at the pictures which ensue, shall say that he would have been justified in putting his name to them? Sentiments and airy dreams hover over them all,—say rather, abide and brood over many,—with such thoughtfulness as the Italian aspect can only match. More surprising is Mr. Coleridge's assertion, that Spenser's descriptions are "not, in the true sense of the word, picturesque; but composed of a wondrous series of images, as in dreams." *Lectures (ut sup.)*, vol. i., p. 93. If, by true sense of the word, he means the acquired sense of piquancy of contrast, or a certain departure from the smoothness of beauty in order to enhance it, Spenser certainly is not in the habit of putting many thorns in his roses. His bowers of bliss, he thought,

did not demand it. The gentle beast that Una rode, would not have cut a very piquant figure in the forest scenery of Mr. Gilpin. But if Coleridge means picturesque in the sense of fitness for picture, and very striking fitness, then the recollections of the masks, or the particular comparison of Prince Arthur's crest with the almond tree (which is the proof he adduces) made him forget the innumerable instances in which the pictorial power is exhibited. Nor was Spenser unaware, nay, he was deeply sensible of the other feelings of the picturesque, as may be seen in his sea-gods' beards (when Proteus kisses Amoret), his "rank grassy fens," his "weeds of glorious feature," his oaks "half dead," his satyrs, gloomy lights, beautiful but unlucky grounds, &c., &c., &c. (for in this sense of the word, there are feelings of the invisible corresponding with the stronger forms of the picturesque). He has himself noticed the theory in his Bower of Bliss, and thus anticipated the modern taste in landscape gardening, the idea of which is supposed to have originated with Milton :

One would have thought (*so cunningly the rude
And scorned parts were mingled with the fine*)
That Nature had for wantonness ensued
Art, and that Art at Nature did repine.
So, striving each the other to undermine,
Each did the other's work more beautify.

But the reader will judge for himself.

I have attached to each of the pictures in this Spenser Gallery the name of the painter, of whose genius it reminded me ; and I think the connoisseur will allow, that the assignment was easy, and that the painter-poet's *range of art* is equally wide and wonderful.

CHARISSA; OR, CHARITY.

Character, Spiritual Love ; Painter for it, Raphael.

She was a woman in her freshest age,
Of wondrous beauty and of bounty rare,
With goodly grace and comely personage,
That was on earth not easy to compare ;
Full of great love ; but Cupid's wanton snare
As hell she hated, chaste in work and will ;
Her neck and breasts were ever open bare,
That ay thereof her babes might suck their fill ;
The rest was all in yellow robes arrayèd still.

A multitude of babes about her hung
Playing their sports, that joyed her to behold,
Whom still she fed, whilst they were weak and young,
But thrust them forth still as they waxèd old ;
And on her head she wore a tire of gold
Adorn'd with gems and owches wondrous fair,*
Whose passing price uneath† was to be told ;
And by her side there *sate a gentle pair*²⁴
Of turtle doves, she sitting in an ivory chair.

²⁴ “*And by her side,*” &c. This last couplet brings at once before us all the dispassionate graces and unsuperfluous treatmen of Raphael’s allegorical females.

* *Owches wondrous fair.* Owches are *carcanets* or ranges of jewels.

† *Uneath.* Scarcely, with difficulty.

HOPE.

Character, Sweetness without Devotedness ; Painter, Correggio.

With him went Hope in rank, a handsome maid,
Of cheerful look, and lovely to behold :
In silken samite she was light array'd,
*And her fair locks were woven up in gold.*²⁵
She alway smil'd ;—and in her hand did hold
An holy-water sprinkle dipp'd in dew,
With which she sprinkled favors manifold
On whom she list and did great liking shew ;
Great liking unto many, but true love to few.

²⁵ “*And her fair locks,*” &c. What a lovely line is that ! and with a beauty how simple and sweet is the sentiment portrayed in the next three words,—“ She alway smil'd !” But almost every line of the stanza is lovely, including the felicitous Catholic image of the

Holy-water sprinkle dipp'd in dew.

Correggio is in every color and expression of the picture.

CUPID USURPING THE THRONE OF JUPITER.

Character, Potency in Weakness ; Painter, the same.

In Satyr's shape, Antiope he snatch'd
And like a fire, when he Ægine essay'd ;
A shepherd, when Mnemosyne he catch'd ;
And like a serpent to the Thracian maid.
While thus on earth great Jove these pageants play'd,
The wing'd boy did thrust into his throne ;
And scoffing, thus unto his mother said :
“ Lo ! now the heavens obey to me alone,
And take me for their Jove, whilst Jove to earth is gone.”

MARRIAGE PROCESSION OF THE THAMES AND MEDWAY.

*Character, Genial Strength, Grace, and Luxury, Painter,
Raphael.*

First came great Neptune with his three-fork'd mace,
 That rules the seas and makes them rise or fall ;
His dewy locks did drop with brine apace,
Under his diadem imperial ;
And by his side his queen, with coronal,
Fair Amphitrite, most divinely fair,
Whose ivory shoulders weren covered all,
As with a robe, with her own silver hair,
 And deck'd with pearls which the Indian seas for her prepare.

These marchèd far afore the other crew,
 And all the way before them as they went
 Triton his trumpet shrill before him blew,
 For goodly triumph and great jolliment,
That made the rocks to roar as they were rent.

Or take another part of the procession, with dolphins and sea-nymphs listening as they went, to

ARION.

Then was there heard a most celestial sound
 Of dainty music, which did next ensue
 Before the spouse. *That was Arion crown'd ;*
 Who playing on his harp, unto him drew
 The ears and hearts of all that goodly crew ;
 That even yet the dolphin which him bore
 Through the Ægean seas from pirates view
 Stood still by him, astonish'd at his lore,
 And all the raging seas for joy forgot to roar.

So went he playing on the watery plain.²⁶

²⁶ "So went he," &c. This sweet, placid, and gently progressing

line is one of Spenser's happy samples of alliteration. And how emphatic is the information—

That was Arion, crown'd.



SIR GUYON BINDING FUROR.

Character, Superhuman Energy, and Rage; Painter, Michael Angelo

In his strong arms he stiffly him embrac'd,
Who, him gain-striving, naught at all prevail'd;
Then him to ground he cast and rudely haled,
And both his hands fast bound behind his back,
And both his feet in fetters to an iron rack.

With hundred iron chains he did him bind,
And hundred knots that him did sore constrain;
Yet his *great iron teeth* he still did grind
And grimly gnash, threat'ning revenge in vain.
His burning eyes, whom bloody streaks did stain,
Starèd full wide, and threw forth sparks of fire,
And more for rank despite, than for great pain,
Shak'd his long locks, color'd like copper wire,²⁷
And bit his tawny beard, to show his raging ire.

²⁷ “*Color'd like copper wire.*” A felicity suggested perhaps by the rhyme. It has all the look, however, of a copy from some painting; perhaps one of Julio Romano's.



UNA (OR FAITH IN DISTRESS).

Character, Loving and Sorrowful Purity glorified.

(May I say, that I think it would take Raphael and Correggio

united to paint this, on account of the exquisite *chiaro-scuro?*
Or might not the painter of the Magdalen have it all to himself?)

Yet she, most faithful lady, all this while,²⁸
Forsaken, woful, solitary maid,
 Far from all people's press, as in exile,
 In wilderness and wasteful deserts stray'd,
 To seek her knight, who subtilly betray'd
 Through that late vision which the enchanter wrought,
 Had her abandon'd. She, of naught afraid,
 Through *woods and wasteness wide* him daily sought,
 Yet wished tidings none of him unto her brought

One day nigh weary of the irksome way,
 From her unhasty beast she did alight,
 And on the grass her dainty limbs did lay
 In secret shadow far from all men's sight:
 From her fair head her fillet she undight
 And laid her stole aside: *her angel's face*
As the great eye of heaven shined bright,
And made a sunshine in the shady place;
 Did never mortal eye behold such heavenly grace.

It fortunèd, out of the thickest wood
 A ramping lion rushèd suddenly,
 Hunting full greedy after savage blood:
 Soon as the royal virgin he did spy,
 With gaping mouth at her ran greedily,
 To have at once devour'd her tender corse;
 But to the prey when as he drew more nigh,
 His bloody rage assuagèd with remorse,
 And with the sight amaz'd, forgot his furious force.

Instead thereof he kiss'd her weary feet,
 And lick'd her lily hand with fawning tongue;
 As he her wrongèd innocence did weet.
 O how can beauty master the most strong,
 And simple truth subdue avenging wrong!
 Whose yielded pride and proud submission,
 Still dreading death when she had markèd long
 Her heart 'gan melt in great compassiōn:
 And drizzling tears did shed for pure affection.

“ *The lion, lord of every beast in field,*”
 Quoth she, “ his princely puissance doth abate,
 And mighty proud to humble weak does yield,

Forgetful of the hungry rage, which late
 Him prick'd with pity of my sad estate —
But he my lion, and my noble lord,
 How does he find in cruel heart to hate
 Her, that him lov'd, and ever most ador'd
As the god of my life? Why hath he me abhorrd?"²⁸

²⁸ " *Yet she*," &c. Coleridge quotes this stanza as "a good instance of what he means" in the following remarks in his Lectures:—" As characteristic of Spenser, I would call your particular attention in the first place to the indescribable sweetness and fluent projections of his verse, very clearly distinguishable from the deeper and more inwoven harmonies of Shakspere and Milton." Good, however, as the stanza is, and beautiful the second line, it does not appear to me so happy an instance of what Coleridge speaks of as many which he might have selected.

The verses marked in the second stanza are one of the most favorite quotations from the Faerie Queene.

²⁹ " *As the god of my life*," &c. Pray let not the reader consent to read this first half of the line in any manner less marked and peremptory. It is a striking instance of the beauty of that "acceleration and retardation of true verse" which Coleridge speaks of. There is to be a hurry on the words *as the*, and a passionate emphasis and passing stop on the word *god*; and so of the next three words.

JUPITER AND MAIA.

Character, Young and Innocent but Conscious and Sensuous Beauty,
Painter, Correggio.

Behold how goodly my fair love does lie
In proud humility!
 Like unto Maia, when as Jove her took
 In Tempè, *lying on the flowery grass,*
'Twixt sleep and wake, after she weary was
With bathing in the Acidalian brook.

NIGHT AND THE WITCH DUESSA,

TAKING SANSJOY IN THEIR CHARIOT TO AEsculapius TO BE RESTORED
TO LIFE.

Character, Dreariness of Scene; Horridness of Aspect and Wicked Beauty, side by side; Painter, Julio Romano.

Then to her iron waggon she betakes
And with her bears the *foul well-favored witch*:
Through mirksome air her ready way she makes,
Her twofold team (of which two black as pitch
And two were brown, yet each to each unlich*)
Did softly swim away, nor ever stamp
Unless she chanc'd their stubborn mouths to twitch;
Then, *foaming tar*, their bridles they would champ,
And trampling the fine element would fiercely ramp.

So well they sped, that they be come at length
Unto the place whereas the Paynim lay
Devoid of outward sense and native strength,
Cover'd with charmed cloud from view of day
And sight of men, since his late luckless fray.
His cruel wounds, with cruddy blood congeal'd,
They binden up so wisely as they may,
And handle softly, till they can be heal'd,
So lay him in her chariot, close in night conceal'd.

*And all the while she stood upon the ground,
The wakeful dogs did never cease to bay;
As giving warning of the unwonted sound,
With which her iron wheels did they affray,
And her dark griesly look them much dismay.
The messenger of death, the ghastly owl,
With dreary shrieks did also her bewray;
And hungry wolves continually did howl
At her abhorred face, so filthy and so foul.³⁰*

* “*Each to each unlich.*” Unlike.

Then turning back in silence soft they stole,
 And brought the heavy corse with easy pace
 To yawning gulf of deep Avernus hole.
 By that same hole, an entrance, dark and base,
 With smoke and sulphur hiding all the place,
 Descends to hell : there creature never pass'd
 That back returnèd without heavenly grace ;
 But dreadful furies which their chains have brast,
 And damnèd sprites sent forth, to make ill men agast.

By that same way the direful dames do drive
 Their *mournful chariot fill'd with rusty blood*,³¹
 And down to Pluto's house are come belive :
 Which passing through, on every side them stood
 The trembling ghosts with *sad amazed mood*,
Chattering their iron teeth, and staring wide
With stony eyes ; and all the hellish brood
 Of fiends infernal flock'd on every side,
To gaze on earthly wight, that with the night durst ride.

³⁰ “*So filthy and so foul.*”—Why he should say this of Night, except, perhaps, in connection with the witch, I cannot say. It seems to me to hurt the “abhorred face.” Night, it is true, may be reviled, or made grand or lovely, as a poet pleases. There is both classical and poetical warrant for all. But the goddess with whom the witch *dared* to ride (as the poet finely says at the close) should have been exhibited, it would seem, in a more awful, however frightful guise.

³¹ “*Their mournful chariot fill'd with rusty blood.*”—There is something wonderfully dreary, strange, and terrible, in this picture. By “rusty blood” (which is very horrid) he must mean the blood half congealing ; altered in patches, like rusty iron. Be this as it may, the word “rusty,” as Warton observes, “ seems to have conveyed the idea of somewhat very loathsome and horrible to our author.”

VENUS IN SEARCH OF CUPID, COMING TO DIANA.

*Character, Contrast of Impassioned and Unimpassioned Beauty—
Cold and Warm Colors mixed; Painter, Titian.*

(Yet I know not whether Annibal Caracci would not better suit the demand for personal expression in this instance. But the recollection of Titian's famous Bath of Diana is forced upon us.)

Shortly unto the wasteful woods she came,
Whereas she found the goddess with her crew,
After late chace of their embrewèd game,
Sitting beside a fountain in a rew;
Some of them washing with the liquid dew
From off their dainty limbs the dusty sweat
And soil, which did defile their lovely hue;
Others lay shaded from the scorching heat;
The rest upon her person gave *attendance great*.

She having hung upon a bough on high
Her bow and painted quiver, had unlac'd
Her silver buskins from her nimble thigh,
And her *lank* loins ungirt and breasts unbrac'd,
After her heat the breathing cold to taste;
Her golden locks, that late in tresses bright
Embraided were for hindering of her haste,
Now loose about her shoulders lay undight,
And were with sweet ambrosia all besprinkled light.

Soon as she Venus saw behind her back,
She was ashamed to be so loose surpris'd,
And wak'd half wrath against her damsels slack
That had not her thereof before aviz'd,
But suffer'd her so carelessly disguiz'd
Be overtaken: *soon her garments loose*²²
Upgathering in her bosom she compriz'd,
Well as she might, and to the goddess rose
Whiles all her nymphs did like a garland her inclose.

“*Soon her garments loose,*” &c.—This picture is from Ovid, but the lovely and beautifully colored comparison of the garland is Spenser’s own.

MAY.

Character, Budding Beauty in male and female; Animal Passion; Luminous Vernal coloring; Painter, the same.

Then came *fair May, the fairest maid* on ground,³³
 Deck’d all with dainties of her season’s pride,
And throwing flowers out of her lap around:
 Upon two brethren’s shoulders she did ride,
 The Twins of Leda; which, on either side,
 Supported her *like to their sovereign queen.*
Lord! how all creatures laugh’d when her they spied,
And leap’d and danc’d as they had ravish’d been;
And Cupid’s self about her flitt’red all in green.

³³“*Then came,*” &c.—Raphael would have delighted (but Titian’s colors would be required) in the lovely and liberal uniformity of this picture,—the young goddess May supported aloft; the two brethren on each side; animals and flowers below; birds in the air, and Cupid streaming overhead in his green mantle. Imagine the little fellow, with a body of Titian’s carnation, tumbling in the air, and playfully holding the mantle, which is flying amply behind, rather than concealing him.

This charming stanza beats the elegant but more formal invocation to May by Milton, who evidently had it in his recollection. Indeed the latter is almost a compilation from various poets. It is, however, too beautiful to be omitted here.

Now the bright morning-star, day’s harbinger,
 Comes dancing from the east, and leads with her
 The flowery May, who from her green lap throws
 The yellow cowslip and the pale primrose.

Hail beauteous May, that dost inspire
 Mirth, and youth, and warm desire!

Woods and groves are of thy dressing,
 Hill and dale doth boast thy blessing.
 Thus we salute thee with our early song,
 And welcome thee, and wish thee long.

Spenser's "Lord! how all creatures laugh'd" is an instance of joyous and impulsive expression not common with English poets, out of the pale of comedy. They have geniality in abundance, but not animal spirits.

AN ANGEL, WITH A PILGRIM AND A FAINTING KNIGHT.

Character, Active Superhuman Beauty, with the finest coloring and contrast ; Painter, the same.

During the while that Guyon did abide
 In Mammon's house, the palmer, whom whilere
 That wanton maid of passage had denied,
 By further search had passage found elsewhere ;
 And being on his way, approachèd near
 While Guyon lay in trance : when suddenly
 He heard a voice that callèd loud and clear,
 "Come hither, hither, O come hastily!"
 That all the fields resounded with the rueful cry.

The palmer leant his ear unto the noise,
 To weet who call'd so importunèdly ;
 Again he heard a more enforcèd voice,
 That bade him come in haste. He by-and-bye
 His feeble feet directed to the cry ;
 Which to that shady delve him brought at last,
 Where Mammon earst did sun his treasury :
 There the good Guyon he found slumbering fast
 In senseless dream ; which sight at first him sore aghast

Beside his head there sat a fair young man,³⁴
 Of wondrous beauty and of freshest years,
 Whose tender bud to blossom new began,
 And flourish far above his equal peers ;
His snowy front, curlèd with golden hairs,

Like Phœbus' face adorn'd with sunny rays,
 Divinely shone ; and two sharp wing'd shears,
Decked with diverse plumes, like painted jays,
 Were fix'd at his back to cut his airy ways

³⁴ “*Beside his head,*” &c.—The superhuman beauty of this angel should be Raphael’s, yet the picture, as a whole, demands Titian ; and the painter of Bacchus was not incapable of the most imaginative exaltation of countenance. As to the angel’s body, no one could have painted it like him,—nor the beautiful jay’s wings ; not to mention the contrast between the pilgrim’s weeds and the knight’s armor. See a picture of Venus blinding Cupid, beautifully engraved by Sir Robert Strange, in which the Cupid has variegated wings.

AURORA AND TITHONUS.

Character, Young and Genial Beauty, contrasted with Age,—the accessories full of the mixed warmth and chillness of morning ; Painter, Guido.

The joyous day ’gan early to appear,
 And fair Aurora from the dewy bed
 Of aged Tithon ’gan herself to rear
 With rosy cheeks, for shame as blushing red.
Her golden locks, for haste, were loosely shed
About her ears, when Una did her mark
 Climb to her chariot, all with flowers spread,
 From heaven high to chase the cheerless dark :
 With merry note her loud salutes the mounting lark.

THE BRIDE AT THE ALTAR.

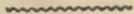
Character, Flushed yet Lady-like Beauty, with ecstatic Angels regarding her ; Painter, the same.

Behold, while she before the altar stands,
Hearing the holy priest that to her speaks,
And blesses her with his two happy hands,
How the red roses flush up in her cheeks !
And the pure snow, with goodly vermeil stain,

Like crimson dyed in grain !

That ev'n the angels, which continually
About the sacred altar do remain,
Forget their service and about her fly,
Oft peeping in her face, that seems more fair ³⁵
The more they on it stare ;
But her sad eyes, still fastened on the ground,
Are governèd with goodly modesty,
That suffers not one look to glance awry,
Which may let in a little thought unsound.

³⁵ “ *Oft peeping in her face,*” &c.—I cannot think the words *peeping* and *stare*, the best which the poet could have used ; but he is aggravating the beauties of his bride in a long epithalamium, and sacrificing everything to her superiority. The third line is felicitous.



A NYMPH BATHING.

Character, Ecstasy of Conscious and Luxurious Beauty ; Painter, Guido.

—Her fair locks which formerly were bound
Up in one knot, she low adown did loose,
Which flowing long and thick, her cloth'd around,
And the ivory in golden mantle gown'd,

So that fair spectacle was from him rest,
 Yet that which rest it, no less fair was found :
So hid in locks and waves from looker's theft,
Naught but her lovely face she for his looking left.

Withal she laugh'd, and she blush'd withal,³⁶
That blushing to her laughter gave more grace,
And laughter to her blushing.

³⁶ “ *Withal she laugh'd,*” &c.—Perhaps this is the loveliest thing of the kind, mixing the sensual with the graceful, that ever was painted. The couplet, *So hid in locks and waves*, &c., would be an excessive instance of the sweets of alliteration, could we bear to miss a particle of it.

THE CAVE OF DESPAIR.

Character, Savage and Forlorn Scenery, occupied by Squalid Misery Painter, Salvator Rosa.

Ere long they come where that same wicked wight
 His dwelling has, low in a hollow cave.
 Far underneath a craggy cliff yplight,
 Dark, doleful, dreary, like a greedy grave,
 That still for carrion carcasses doth crave ;
 On top whereof ay dwelt the ghastly owl,
 Shrieking his baleful note, which ever drove
 Far from that haunt all other cheerful fowl,
 And all about it wand'ring ghosts did wail and howl :

And all about *old stocks and stubs of trees,*
Whereon nor fruit nor leaf was ever seen,
 Did hang upon the *ragged rocky knees,*
 On which had many wretches hang'd been,
 Whose carcasses were scattered on the green,
 And thrown about the cliffs. Arrivèd there,
 That bare-head knight, for dread and doleful teen,*
 Would fain have fled, nor durst approachen near,
 But th' other forc'd him stay and comforted in fear.

* *Tean*—anxiety.

*Look'd deadly duil, and starèd as astoun'd ;
 His raw-bone cheeks, through penury and pine,
 Were shrunk into his jaws, as he did never dine.
 That darksome cave they enter where they find
That cursed man low sitting on the ground,
Musing full sadly in his sullen mind ;
His griesly locks, long growen and unbound,
Disordered hung about his shoulders round,
*And hid his face through which the hollow eyne.**

His garment naught but many ragged clouts,
 With thorns together pinn'd and patchèd was,
 The which his naked sides he wrapp'd about ;
 And him beside there lay upon the grass
 A dreary corse, whose life away did pass,
 All wallow'd in his own yet lukewarm blood,
 That from his wound yet wellèd fresh alas !
 In which a rusty knife fast fixed stood,
 And made an open passage for the gushing flood.

Still finer than this description are the morbid sophistry and the fascinations of terror that follow it in the original ; but as they are less poetical or pictorial than argumentative, the extract is limited accordingly. There is a tradition that when Sir Philip Sidney read this part of the Faerie Queene, he fell into transports of admiration.



A KNIGHT IN BRIGHT ARMOR LOOKING INTO A CAVE.

*Character, A deep effect of Chiaroscuro, making deformity visible
 Painter, Rembrandt.*

But full of fire and greedy hardiment,
 The youthful knight would not for aught be stay'd,
 But forth unto the darksome hole he went,
 And lookèd in. *His glistering armor made*
*A little glooming light, much like a shade ;*³⁷
By which he saw the ugly monster plain,
 Half like a serpent horribly display'd,
 But th' other half did woman's shape retain,
 Most loathsome, filthy foul, and full of vile disdain.

³⁷ “*A little glooming light, much like a shade.*”—Spenser is very fond of this effect, and has repeatedly painted it. I am not aware that anybody noticed it before him. It is evidently the original of the passage in Milton:—

Where glowing embers through the room
Teach light to counterfeit a gloom.

Observe the pause at the words *lookèd in.*

MALBECCO SEES HELLENORE DANCING WITH THE SATYRS.

Character, Luxurious Abandonment to Mirth; Painter, Nicholas Poussin.

—Afterwards, close creeping as he might,
He in a bush did hide his fearful head :
The jolly satyrs, full of fresh delight,
Came dancing forth, and with them nimbly led
Fair Hellenore, with garlands all bespread,
Whom their May-lady they had newly made :
She, proud of that new honor which they redd,*
And of their lovely fellowship full glad,
Danc’d lively: *and her face did with a laurel shade.*

The silly man then in a thicket lay,
Saw all this goodly sport, and grievèd sore,
Yet durst he not against it do or say,
But did his heart with bitter thoughts *engore*
To see the unkindness of his Hellenore.
All day they dancèd with great lustyhead,
And with their hornèd feet *the green grass wore,*
The whiles their goats upon the browses fed,
Till drooping Phæbus’ gan to hide his golden head.

* “*That new honor which they redd.*”—Areaded, awarded.

LANDSCAPE,

WITH DAMSELS CONVEYING A WOUNDED SQUIRE ON HIS HORSE.

Character, Select Southern Elegance, with an intimation of fine Architecture; Painter, Claude. (Yet "mighty" woods hardly belong to him.)

Into that forest far they thence him led,
 Where was their dwelling, in a pleasant glade
 With mountains round about environèd ;
 And mighty woods which did the valley shade
 And like a stately theatre it made,
 Spreading itself into a spacious plain ;
 And in the midst a little river play'd
 Amongst the pumy stones, which seem'd to plain
 With gentle murmur, that his course they did restrain.

Beside the same a dainty place there lay,
 Planted with myrtle trees and laurels green,
 In which the birds sung many a lovely lay
 Of God's high praise and of their sweet love's teen,
 As it an earthly paradise had been ;
 In whose enclosèd shadows there was pight
 A fair pavilion, scarcely to be seen.

THE NYMPHS AND GRACES DANCING TO A SHEPHERD'S
 PIPE; OR,

APOTHEOSIS OF A POET'S MISTRESS.

Character, Nakedness without Impudency : Multitudinous and Innocent Delight; Exaltation of the principal Person from Circumstances, rather than her own Ideality; Painter, Albano.

Unto this place whereas the elfin knight
 Approach'd, him seemèd that the merry sound

Of a shrill pipe he playing heard on height,
 And many feet fast thumping the hollow ground ;
 That through the woods their echo did rebound ;
 He higher drew, to weet what might it be ;
 There he a troop of ladies dancing found
 Full merrily, and making gladful glee,
 And in the midst a shepherd piping he did see.

He durst not enter into the open green,
 For dread of them unwares to be descry'd,
 For breaking off their dance, if he were seen ;
 But in the covert of the wood did bide,
 Beheld of all, yet of them unespied :
 There he did see (that pleas'd much his sight
 That even he himself his eyes envied)
A hundred naked maidens, lily white,
All rangèd in a ring, and dancing in delight.

All they without were rangèd in a ring
 And dancèd round, but in the midst of them
 Three other ladies did both dance and sing,
 The whilst the rest them round about did hem,
 And like a garland did in compass stem ;
 And in the midst of those same three were placed
 Another damsels, as a precious gem
 Amidst a ring most richly well enchaced,
 That with her goodly presence all the rest much graced.

Those were the Graces, daughters of delight.
 Handmaids of Venus, which are wont to haunt
 Upon this hill, and dance there day and night ;
 Those three to man all gifts of grace do graunt,
 And all that Venus in herself doth vaunt
 Is borrowèd of them ; but that fair one
 That in the midst was placed paravaunt,
 Was she to whom that shepherd pip'd alone,
 That made him pipe so merrily as never none.

She was, to weet, that jolly shepherd's lass
 Which pipèd there unto that merry rout ;
 That jolly shepherd, which there piped, was
 Poor Colin Clout (who knows not Colin Clout ?) ;
 He pip'd apace, whilst they him danc'd about.
Pipe, jolly shepherd ! pipe thou now apace
Unto thy love, that made thee low to lout ;
Thy love is present there with thee in place,
*Thy love is there advaunst to be another grace.*²⁶

^{ss} “*Thy love is there advanc’d,*” &c.—And there she remains, dancing in the midst of the Graces for ever, herself a Grace, made one by the ordinance of the poor but great poet who here addresses himself under his pastoral title, and justly prides himself on the power of conferring immortality on his love. The apostrophe is as affecting as it is elevating, and the whole ~~scopie~~ conceived in the highest possible spirit of mixed wildness and delicacy.

A PLUME OF FEATHERS AND AN ALMOND TREE.

In this instance, which is the one he adduces in proof of his remark on the picturesque, the reader must agree with Coleridge, that the description (I mean of the almond tree), however charming, is not fit for a picture: it wants accessories; to say nothing of the reference to the image illustrated, and the feeling of too much minuteness and closeness in the very distance. Who is to paint the tender locks “every one,” and the whisper of “every little breath?”

Upon the top of all his lofty crest
 A bunch of hairs discolor’d diversely,
 With sprinkled pearl and gold full richly dress’d,
 Did shake and seem to dance for jollity.
Like to an almond tree, ymountèd high,
On top of green Selinis all alone,
With blossoms brave bedeckèd daintily,
Whose tender locks do tremble every one,
At every little breath that under heaven is blown.

What an exquisite last line! but the whole stanza is perfection. The word jollity seems to show the *plumpness* of the plume; what the fop in Molière calls its *embonpoint*.

Holà, porteurs, holà! Là, là, là, là, là. Je pense que ces marauds-là ont dessein de me briser à force de heurter contre les murailles et les pavés.

1 *Porteur.* Dame, c'est que la porte est étroite. Vous avez voulu aussi que nous soyons entrés jusqu'ici.

Mascarille. Je le crois bien. Voudriez-vous, faquins, que j'exposasse l'embonpoint de mes plumes aux inclémences de la saison pluvieuse, et que j'allasse imprimer mes souliers en boue ?—*Les Precieuses Ridicules*, sc. 7.

[*Mascarille* (to the sedan chairmen). Stop, stop ! What the devil is all this ? Am I to be beaten to pieces against the walls and pavement ?

Chairman. Why you see the passage is narrow. You told us to bring you right in.

Mascarille. Unquestionably. Would you have me expose the *embon-point* of my feathers to the inclemency of the rainy season, and leave the impression of my pumps in the mud ?]



Our gallery shall close with a piece of

ENCHANTED MUSIC.

*Eftsoons they heard a most melodious sound
Of all that might delight a dainty ear.
Such as, at once, might not on living ground,
Save in this paradise be heard elsewhere :
Right hard it was for wight which did it hear
To weet what manner music that might be,
For all that pleasing is to living ear
Was there consorted in one harmony ;
Birds, voices, instruments, winds, waters, all agree.*

*The joyous birds, shrouded in cheerful shade
Their notes unto the voice attempred sweet :
Th' angelical, soft, trembling voices made
To th' instruments divine correspondence meet ;
The silver sounding instruments did meet
With the base murmur of the water's fall ;
The water's fall, with difference discreet,
Now soft, now loud, unto the wind did call ;
The gentle warbling wind low answerèd to all.³⁹*

³⁹ “*The gentle warbling wind*,” &c. This exquisite stanza is a specimen of perfect modulation, upon the principles noticed in the description of *Archimago's Hermitage*. The reader may, perhaps, try it upon them. “Compare it,” says Upton, “with Tasso's *Gierusalemme Liberata*, canto 16, st. 12.” Readers who understand Italian will gladly compare it, and see how far their countryman has surpassed the sweet poet of the south.

M A R L O W E ,

BORN, ACCORDING TO MALONE, ABOUT 1565,—DIED, 1593.

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If ever there was a born poet, Marlowe was one. He perceived things in their spiritual as well as material relations, and impressed them with a corresponding felicity. Rather, he struck them as with something sweet and glowing that rushes by ;— perfumes from a censer,—glances of love and beauty. And he could accumulate images into as deliberate and lofty a grandeur. Chapman said of him, that he stood

Up to the chin in the Pierian flood.

Drayton describes him as if inspired by the recollection :—

Next Marlowe, bathèd in the Thespian springs,  
Had in him *those brave translunary things,*  
*That the first poets had ; his raptures were*  
*All air and fire*, which made his verses clear  
*For that fine madness still he did retain,*  
*Which rightly should possess a poet's brain.*

But this happy genius appears to have had as unhappy a will, which obscured his judgment. It made him descend to write fustian for the town, in order to rule over it ; subjected him to the charge of impiety, probably for nothing but too scornfully treating irreverent notions of the Deity ; and brought him, in the prime of his life, to a violent end in a tavern. His plays abound in wilful and self-worshipping speeches, and every one of them turns upon some kind of ascendancy at the expense of other people. He was the head of a set of young men from the university, the Peeles, Greens, and others, all more or less possessed of a true poetical vein, who, bringing scholarship to the

theatre, were intoxicated with the new graces they threw on the old bombast, carried to their height the vices as well as wit of the town, and were destined to see, with indignation and astonishment, their work taken out of their hands, and none better, by the uneducated interloper from Stratford-upon-Avon.

Marlowe enjoys the singular and (so far) unaccountable honor of being the only English writer to whom Shakspeare seems to have alluded with approbation. In *As You Like It*, Phœbe says,

Dead Shepherd ! now I know thy saw of might,—  
“ Who ever lov'd that lov'd not at first sight ?”

The “saw” is in Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*, a poem not comparable with his plays.

The ranting part of Marlowe's reputation has been chiefly owing to the tragedy of *Tamburlaine*, a passage in which is laughed at in *Henry the Fourth*, and has become famous. Tamburlaine cries out to the captive monarchs whom he has yoked to his car,—

Hollo, ye pampered jades of Asia,  
What ! can ye draw but twenty miles a-day,  
And have so proud a chariot at your heels,  
And such a coachman as great Tamburlaine ?

Then follows a picture drawn with real poetry :

The horse that guide the golden eye of heaven,  
*And blow the morning from their nostrils* (read *nosterils*),  
Making their fiery gait above the clouds,  
Are not so honor'd in their governor,  
As you, ye slaves, in mighty Tamburlaine.

It has latterly been thought, that a genius like Marlowe could have had no hand in a play so bombastic as this huffing tragedy. But besides the weighty and dignified, though monotonous tone of his versification in many places (what Ben Jonson, very exactly as well as finely, calls “ Marlowe's mighty *line*,”) there are passages in it of force and feeling, of which I doubt whether any of his contemporaries were capable in so sustained a degree, though Green and Peele had felicitous single lines, and occa-

sionally a refined sweetness. Take, for instance, the noble verses to be found in the description of Tamburlaine himself, which probably suggested to Milton his "Atlantean shoulders"—"fit to bear mightiest monarchies"—and to Beaumont a fine image, which the reader will see in his Melancholy :—

*Of stature tall and straightly fashioned  
Like his desire lift upward and divine,  
So large of limbs, his joints so strongly knit,  
Such breadth of shoulders as might mainly bear  
Old Atlas' burthen :—  
Pale of complexion, wrought in him with passion, &c.*

By "passion" we are to understand, not anger, but deep emotions. Peele or Green might possibly have written the beautiful verse that closes these four lines :

*Kings of Argier, Moroccus, and of Fesse,  
You that have marched with happy Tamburlaine  
As far as from the frozen place of heaven  
Unto the watery morning's ruddy bower :—*

but the following is surely Marlowe's own :—

*As princely lions when they rouse themselves,  
Stretching their paws and threatening herds of beasts,  
So in his armor looketh Tamburlaine.—*

And in the following is not only a hint of the scornful part of his style, such as commences the extract from the *Jew of Malta*, but the germ of those lofty and harmonious nomenclatures, which have been thought peculiar to Milton.

*So from the east unto the farthest west  
Shall Tamburlaine extend his puissant arm.  
The gallies and those piling brigandines  
That yearly sail to the Venetian gulf  
And hover in the Straits for Christian wreck,  
Shall lie at anchor in the isle Arant,  
Until the Persian fleet and men of wars,  
Sailing along the Oriental sea,  
Have fetch'd about the Indian continent,  
Even from Persepolis to Mexico,  
And thence unto the Straits of Jubal-tar.*

Milton never surpassed the elevation of that close. Who also but Marlowe is likely to have written the fine passage extracted into this volume, under the title of "*Beauty beyond Expression,*" in which the thought argues as much expression, as the style a confident dignity? Tamburlaine was most likely a joint-stock piece, got up from the manager's chest by Marlowe, Nash, and perhaps half-a-dozen others; for there are two consecutive plays on the subject, and the theatres of our own time are not unacquainted with this species of manufacture.

But I am forgetting the plan of my book. Marlowe, like Spenser, is to be looked upon as a poet who had no native precursors. As Spenser is to be criticised with an eye to his poetic ancestors, who had nothing like the Faerie Queene, so is Marlowe with reference to the authors of Gorboduc. He got nothing from them; he prepared the way for the versification, the dignity, and the pathos of his successors, who have nothing finer of the kind to show than the death of Edward the Second—not Shakspeare himself:—and his imagination, like Spenser's, haunted those purely poetic regions of ancient fabling and modern rapture, of beautiful forms and passionate expressions, which they were the first to render the common property of inspiration, and whence their language drew "empyreal air." Marlowe and Spenser are the first of our poets who perceived the beauty of words; not as apart from their significance, nor upon occasion only, as Chaucer did (more marvellous in that than themselves, or than the originals from whom he drew), but as a habit of the poetic mood, and as receiving and reflecting beauty through the feeling of the ideas.

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#### THE JEW OF MALTA'S IDEA OF WEALTH.

So that of thus much that return was made,  
And of the third part of the Persian ships,  
There was the venture summ'd and satisfied.  
As for those Samnites, and the men of Uz,  
That bought my Spanish oils and wines of Greece,<sup>1</sup>  
Here have I purs'd their paltry silverlings.

*Fie ; what a trouble 'tis to count this trash !*  
 Well fare the Arabians, who so richly pay  
 The things they traffic for with wedge of gold,  
 Whereof a man may easily in a day  
 Tell that which may maintain him all his life  
 The needy groom, that never finger'd groat,  
 Would make a miracle of thus much coin ;  
 But he whose steel-barr'd coffers are cramm'd full,  
 And all his life-time had been tired (read *ti-er-ed*),  
 Wearying his fingers' ends with telling it,  
 Would in his age be loth to labor so,  
 And for a pound to sweat himself to death.  
 Give *me* the merchants of the Indian mines,  
 That trade in metal of the purest mould ;  
 The wealthy Moor, that in the eastern rocks  
 Without control can pick his riches up,  
*And in his house heap pearl like pebble-stones ;*  
 Receive them free, and sell them by the weight ;  
*Bags of fiery opals, sapphires, amethysts,*  
*Jacinths, hard topaz, grass-green emeralds,*  
*Beauteous rubies, sparkling diamonds,*  
*And sold-seen costly stones of so great price,*  
*As one of them indifferently rated,*  
*And of a carat of this quantity,*  
*May serve, in peril of calamity,*  
*To ransom great kings from captivity :*  
 This is the ware wherein consists my wealth ;  
 And thus, methinks, should men of judgment frame  
 Their means of traffic from the vulgar trade,  
 And as their wealth increaseth, so inclose  
*Infinite riches in a little room.*  
 But now how stands the wind ?  
 Into what corner peers my halcyon's bill ?\*  
 Ha ! to the East ? yes ; see how stand the vanes ?  
 East and by south. Why then, I hope my ships  
 I sent for Egypt and the bordering isles  
 Are gotten up by Nilus' winding banks ;  
*Mine argosies from Alexandria,<sup>2</sup>*  
*Loaden with spice and silks, now under sail,*  
*Are smoothly gliding down by Candy shore*  
*To Malta, through our Mediterranean Sea.*

<sup>1</sup> " *Samnites*" and " *men of Uz*," and " *Spanish oils*?" — That is to say, countrymen and contemporaries of old Rome, of Arabian

\* " *My halcyon's bill*." — The halcyon is the figure on the vane.

Job, and the modern Spanish merchants ! Marlowe, though he was a scholar, cared no more for geography and consistent history than Shakspeare. He took the world as he found it at the theatre, where it was a mixture of golden age innocence, tragical enormity, and a knowledge superior to all petty and transitory facts.

<sup>2</sup> “ *Mine argosies from Alexandria,*” &c.—Note the wonderful sweetness of these four lines, particularly the last. The variety of the vowels, the delicate alliteration, and the lapse of the two concluding verses, are equal, as a study, to anything in Spenser.



### A VISION OF HELEN.

*She passes between two Cupids, having been summoned from the next world by desire of Faustus.*

*Faust.* Was this the face that launch'd a thousand ships,  
And burnt the topmost towers of Ilium ?  
*Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss.*—  
Her lips suck forth my soul ! see where it flies.  
Come, Helen, come, give me my soul again.  
Here will I dwell, for heav'n is in these lips,  
*And all is dross that is not Helena.*  
I will be Paris ; and for love of thee,  
Instead of Troy, shall Wittenberg be sack'd ;  
And I will combat with weak Menelaus,  
And wear my colors on my plumèd crest ;  
Yea, I will wound Achilles in the heel,  
And then return to Helen for a kiss.  
*Oh, thou art fairer than the evening air,*  
*Clad in the beauty of a thousand stars ;*  
Brighter art thou than flaming Jupiter,<sup>3</sup>  
When he appear'd to hapless Semele ;  
More lovely than the monarch of the sea,  
In wanton Arethusa's azure arms ;  
And none but thou shalt be my paramour !

<sup>3</sup> “ *Brighter art thou,*” &c.—Much cannot be said of the five lines here ensuing ; but their retention was necessary to the entire feeling or classical association of the speech, if not to a certain lingering modulation.

## MYTHOLOGY AND COURT AMUSEMENTS.

*Gaveston meditates how to govern Edward the Second*

I must have wanton poets, pleasant wits,  
Musicians, that *with touching of a string*  
May draw the pliant king which way I please.  
Music and poetry are his delight:  
Therefore I'll have Italian masks by night;  
Sweet speeches, comedies, and pleasing shows;  
And in the day, when he shall walk abroad,  
Like sylvan nymphs my pages shall be clad:  
My men, like satyrs grazing on the lawns,  
Shall with their goat-feet dance the antic hay.  
Sometimes a lovely boy in Dian's shape,  
*With hair that gilds the water as it glides,*  
Shall bathe him in a spring; and there, hard by,  
One, like Actæon, peeping through the grove,  
Shall by the angry goddess be transform'd;  
And running in the likeness of a hart,  
By yelping hounds pull'd down, shall seem to die—  
Such things as these best please his Majesty.

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## BEAUTY BEYOND EXPRESSION.

If all the pens that ever poet held  
Had fed the feeling of their master's thoughts,  
And ev'ry sweetness that inspired their hearts,  
And minds, and muses on admirèd themes;  
If all the heavenly quintessence they still  
From their immortal flowers of poesy,  
Wherein, as in a mirror, we perceive  
The highest reaches of a human wit;  
If these had made one poem's period,  
And all combin'd in beauty's worthiness.  
*Yet should there hover in their restless heads,*  
*One thought, one grace, one wonder, at the best;*  
*Which into words no virtue can digest.*

## THE PASSIONATE SHEPHERD TO HIS LOVE.

*Come live with me and be my love,  
And we will all the pleasures prove,  
That hill and valley, grove and field,  
And all the craggy mountains yield  
There will we sit upon the rocks,  
And see the shepherds feed their flocks  
By shallow rivers, to whose falls  
Melodious birds sing madrigals,  
There will I make thee beds of roses,  
With a thousand fragrant posies;  
A cap of flowers and a kirtle  
Embroider'd all with leaves of myrtle ;  
A gown made of the finest wool  
Which from our pretty lambs we pull ;  
Slippers lin'd choicely for the cold,  
With buckles of the purest gold ;  
A belt of straw, and ivy buds,  
With coral clasps and amber studs.*

*The shepherd swains shall dance and sing  
For thy delight each May morning ;  
And if these pleasures may thee move,  
Then live with me and be my love.*

This song is introduced, not so much for its poetical excellence (though it is quite what a poet would write on the occasion) as because it is one of those happy embodiments of a thought which all the world thinks at some time or other; and which therefore *takes* wonderfully with them when somebody utters it. The “golden buckles” and “amber studs” are not to be considered as a contradiction to the rest of the imagery; for we are to suppose it a gentlewoman to whom the invitation is addressed, and with whom her bridegroom proposes to go and play at shepherd and shepherdess, at once realizing the sweets of lowliness and the advantages of wealth. A charming fancy! and realized too sometimes; though Sir Walter Raleigh could not let it alone, but must needs refute it in some excellent

verses, too good for the occasion. Sir Walter, a great but wilful man (in some respects like Marlowe himself, and a true poet too—I wish he had written more poetry), could pass and ultimately lose his life in search of El Dorados,—whole countries made of gold,—but doubted whether an innocent young lady and gentleman, or so, should aim at establishing a bit of Arcadia.

There are so many copies of this once-popular production, all different and none quite consistent, owing, no doubt, to oral repetitions and the license of musical setting (for no copy of it is to be found coeval with its production), that, after studious comparison of several, I have exercised a certain discretion in the one here printed, and omitted also an ill-managed repetition of the burthen:—not, of course, with the addition of a syllable. Such readers, therefore, as it may concern, are warned not to take the present copy for granted, at the expense of the others; but to compare them all, and make his choice.

## SHAKSPEARE,

BORN, 1564—DIED, 1616.

SHAKSPEARE is here in his purely poetical creations, apart (as much as it is possible for such a thinker and humanist to be) from thought and humanity. There is nothing wanting either to the imagination or fancy of Shakspeare. The one is lofty, rich, affecting, palpable, subtle ; the other full of grace, playfulness, and variety. He is equal to the greatest poets in grandeur of imagination ; to all in diversity of it ; to all in fancy ; to all in everything else, except in a certain primeval intensity, such as Dante's and Chaucer's ; and in narrative poetry, which (to judge from Venus and Adonis, and the Rape of Lucrece) he certainly does not appear to have had a call to write. He over-informed it with reflection. It has been supposed that when Milton spoke of Shakspeare as

*Fancy's child*

Warbling his native wood-notes wild,

the genealogy did him injustice. But the critical distinction between Fancy and Imagination was hardly determined till of late. Collins himself, in his Ode on the Poetical Character, uses the word Fancy to imply both, even when speaking of Milton ; and so did Milton, I conceive, when speaking of Shakspeare. The propriety of the words, "native wood-notes wild," is not so clear. I take them to have been hastily said by a learned man of an unlearned. But Shakspeare, though he had not a college education, was as learned as any man, in the highest sense of the word, by a scholarly intuition. He had the spirit of learning. He was aware of the education he wanted,

and by some means or other supplied it. He could anticipate Milton's own Greek and Latin;

Tortive and errant from his course of growth—  
The multitudinous seas incarnardine—  
A pudency so rosy, &c.

In fact, if Shakspeare's poetry has any fault, it is that of being too learned ; too over-informed with thought and allusion. His wood-notes wild surpass Haydn and Bach. His wild roses were all twenty times double. He thinks twenty times to another man's once, and makes all his serious characters talk as well as he could himself,—with a superabundance of wit and intelligence. He knew, however, that fairies must have a language of their own ; and hence, perhaps, his poetry never runs in a more purely poetical vein than when he is speaking in their persons ;—I mean it is less mixed up with those heaps of comments and reflections which, however the wilful or metaphysical critic may think them suitable on all occasions, or succeed in persuading us not to wish them absent, by reason of their stimulancy to one's mental activity, are assuredly neither always proper to dramatic, still less to narrative poetry ; nor yet so opposed to all idiosyncrasy on the writer's part as Mr. Coleridge would have us believe. It is pretty manifest, on the contrary, that the over-informing intellect which Shakspeare thus carried into all his writings, must have been a personal as well as literary peculiarity ; and as the events he speaks of are sometimes more interesting in their nature than even a superabundance of his comments can make them, readers may be pardoned in sometimes wishing that he had let them speak a little more briefly for themselves. Most people would prefer Ariosto's and Chaucer's narrative poetry to his ; the Griselda, for instance, and the story of Isabel,—to the Rape of Lucrece. The intense passion is enough. The misery is enough. We do not want even the divinest talk about what Nature herself tends to petrify into silence. *Cura ingentes stupent.* Our divine poet had not quite outlived the times when it was thought proper for a writer to say everything that came into his head. He was a student of Chaucer : he beheld the living fame of Spenser ; and his

fellow-dramatists did not help to restrain him. The players told Ben Jonson that Shakspeare never blotted a line ; and Ben says he was thought invidious for observing, that he wished he had blotted a thousand. He sometimes, he says, required stopping. (*Aliquando sufflaminandus erat.*) Was this meant to apply to his conversation as well as writing ? Did he manifest a like exuberance in company ? Perhaps he would have done so, but for modesty and self-knowledge. To keep his eloquence altogether within bounds was hardly possible ; and who could have wished it had been ? Would that he had had a Boswell a hundred times as voluminous as Dr. Johnson's, to take all down ! Bacon's Essays would have seemed like a drop out of his ocean. He would have swallowed dozens of Hobbeses by anticipation, like larks for his supper.

If Shakspeare, instead of proving himself the greatest poet in the world, had written nothing but the fanciful scenes in this volume, he would still have obtained a high and singular reputation,—that of Poet of the Fairies. For he may be said to have invented the Fairies ; that is to say, he was the first that turned them to poetical account ; that bore them from clownish neighborhoods to the richest soils of fancy and imagination.

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## WHOLE STORY OF THE TEMPEST.

### ENCHANTMENT, MONSTROSITY, AND LOVE.

The whole story of the Tempest is really contained in this scene.

\* *Mira.* I pray you, sir,  
(For still 'tis beating in my mind) your reason  
For raising this sea-storm ?

*Pro.* Know thus far forth ;—  
By accident, most strange, bountiful fortune,  
Now my dear lady, hath mine enemies  
Brought to this shore : and by my prescience,  
I find my zenith doth depend upon

A most auspicious star : whose influence,  
If now I court not, but omit, my fortunes  
Will ever after droop :—here cease more questions ;  
Thou art inclin'd to sleep ; 'tis a good dulness,  
And give it way ;—I know thou canst not choose.—

(*Miranda sleeps.*)

Come away, servants, come ; I am ready now ;  
Approach, my Ariel ; come.

*Enter ARIEL.*

*Ari.* All hail, great master ! grave sir. hail ! I come  
To answer thy best pleasure : be 't to fly,  
To swim, to dive into the fire, to ride  
On the curl'd clouds ; to thy strong bidding, task  
Ariel, and all his quality.

*Pro.* Hast thou, spirit,  
Perform'd to point the tempest that I bade thee ?

*Ari.* To every article.  
I boarded the king's ship ; now on the bark,  
Now in the waist, the deck, in every cabin,  
*I flam'd amazement.* Sometimes, I'd *divide,*  
*And burn in many places* ; on the top-mast,  
The yards, and bowsprit, would I flame distinctly,  
*Then meet, and join :* Jove's lightnings, *the precursors*  
*O' the dreadful thunder-claps* more momentary  
And *sight out-running* were not : the fire and *cryks*  
Of sulphurous roaring, the most mighty Neptune  
Seemed to besiege, and make his bold waves tremble.  
Yea, his dread trident shake.

*Pro.* My brave spirit !  
Who was so firm, so constant, that this coil  
Would not infect his reason ?

*Ari.* Not a soul  
But felt a fever of the mind, and play'd  
Some tricks of desperation ; all, but mariners,  
Plung'd in the foaming brine, and quit the vessel  
*Then all a-fire with me :* the king's son, Ferdinand  
With hair up-staring (then like reeds, not hair),  
Was the first man that leap'd ; cried, *Hell is empty,*  
*And all the devils are here.*

*Pro.* Why that 's my spirit !  
But was not this nigh shore ?

*Ari.* Close by, my master.

*Pro.* But are they, Ariel, safe ?

*Ari.* Not a hair perish'd ;  
On their sustaining garments not a blemish,

But fresher than before : and as thou bad'st me,  
 In troops I have dispers'd them 'bout the isle :  
 The king's son have I landed by himself ;  
 Whom I left cooling of the air with sighs,  
 In an odd angle of the isle, and sitting,—  
 His arms in *this sad knot*.

*Pro.* Of the king's ship,  
 The mariners, say, how thou hast dispos'd,  
 And all the rest o' the fleet ?

*Ari.* Safely in harbor  
 Is the king's ship ; in the nook, where once  
*Thou call'dst me up at midnight to fetch dew*  
*From the still vexed Bermoothes* ; there she's hid ;  
 The mariners all under hatches stow'd ;  
 Whom, with a charm join'd to their suffer'd labor,  
 I have left asleep ; and for the rest o' the fleet,  
 Which I dispers'd, they all have met again ;  
 And are upon the Mediterranean flote,  
 Bound sadly home for Naples ;  
 Supposing that they saw the king's ship wreck'd,  
 And his great person perish.

*Pro.* Ariel, my charge  
 Exactly is perform'd ; but there's more work :  
 What is the time o' the day ?

*Ari.* Past the mid season.

*Pro.* At least two glasses : the time 'twixt six and now,  
 Must by us both be spent most preciously.

*Ari.* Is there more toil ? Since thou dost give me pains.  
 Let me remember thee what thou hast promis'd,  
 Which is not yet performed me.

*Pro.* How now ! moody ?  
 What is 't thou canst demand ?

*Ari.* My liberty.

*Pro.* Before the time be out ? no more.

*Ari.* I pray thee  
 Remember, I have done thee worthy service ;  
 Told thee no lies, made no mistakings, serv'd  
 Without or grudge or grumblings : thou didst promise  
 To bate me a full year.

*Pro.* Dost thou forget  
 From what a torment I did free thee ?

*Ari.* No.

*Pro.* Thou dost ; and think'st  
 It much to *tread the ooze* of the salt deep ,  
*To run upon the sharp wind of the north* ;  
 To do me business in the veins of the earth ,

When it is bak'd with frost.

*Ari.* I do not, sir.

*Pro.* Thou liest, malignant thing! Hast thou forgot  
The foul witch Sycorax, who, with age and envy,  
Was grown into a hoop? Hast thou forgot her?

*Ari.* No, sir.

*Pro.* Thou hast: where was she born? speak; tell me.

*Ari.* Sir, in Argier.

*Pro.* O, was she so? I must,  
Once in a month, recount what thou hast been,  
Which thou forget'st. This damn'd witch, Sycorax,  
For mischiefs manifold, and sorceries *terrible*

*To enter human hearing*, from Argier  
Thou know'st was banish'd, for one thing she did;  
They would not take her life: Is not this true?

*Ari.* Aye, sir.

*Pro.* This blue-ey'd hag was hither brought with child,  
And here was left by the sailors: Thou, my slave,  
As thou report'st thyself, was then her servant:  
And, for thou wast a spirit too delicate  
To act her *earthy and abhor'd commands*,  
Refusing her grand hests, she did confine thee  
By help of her more potent ministers,  
And in her most unmitigable rage,  
Into a cloven pine: within which rift,  
Imprison'd, thou didst painfully remain  
A dozen years; within which space she died,  
And left thee there; where thou didst vent thy groans,  
*As fast as mill-wheels strike:* Then was this island  
(Save for the son which she did *litter* here,  
*A freckled whelp, hag-born*) not honor'd with  
A human shape.

*Ari.* Yes; Caliban her son.

*Pro.* Dull thing, I say so,—he, that Caliban,  
Whom now I keep in service. Thou best know'st  
What torments I did find thee in; *thy groans*  
*Did make wolves howl*, and penetrate the breasts  
Of ever angry bears: it was a torment  
To lay upon the damn'd, which Sycorax  
Could not again undo; it was mine art,  
When I arriv'd, and heard thee, that made gape  
The pine and let thee out.

*Ari.* I thank thee, master.

*Pro.* If thou more murmur'st, I will rend an oak,  
And peg thee in his knotty entrails, till  
Thou hast howl'd away twelve winters.

*Ari.* Pardon, master :  
I will be correspondent to command,  
And do my spiriting gently.

*Pro.* Do so ; and after two days  
I will discharge thee.

*Ari.* That's my noble master !  
What shall I do ? say ? what shall I do ?

*Pro.* Go make thyself like to a nymph o' the sea ;  
Be subject to no sight but mine ; invisible  
To every eyeball else. Go, take this shape,  
And hither come in 't : hence with diligence.

(Exit *Ariel.*)

Awake, dear heart, awake ! thou hast slept well :  
Awake !

*Mira.* The strangeness of your story put  
Heaviness in me.

*Pro.* Shake it off; come on ;  
We'll visit Caliban, my slave, who never  
Yields us kind answer.

*Mira.* 'Tis a villain, sir,  
I do not love to look on.

*Pro.* But as 'tis,  
We cannot miss him ; he does make our fire,  
Fetch in our wood, and serves in offices  
That profit us. What ho ! slave ! Caliban !  
*Thou earth thou !* speak.

*Cali.* (within.)—There's wood enough within.

*Pro.* Come forth, I say : there's other business for thee .  
Come forth, thou tortoise ! when ?

*Re-enter ARIEL, like a water-nymph.*

Fine apparition ! my quaint Ariel !  
Hark in thine ear.

*Ari.* My lord, it shall be done.

(Exit)

*Pro.* Thou poisonous slave, got by the devil himself  
Upon thy wicked dam, come forth !

*Enter CALIBAN.*

*Cali.* As wicked dew as e'er my mother brush'd  
With raven's feather from unwholesome fen  
Drop on you both ! a south-west blow on ye,  
And blister you all o'er !

*Pro.* For this, be sure, to-night thou shalt have cramps,  
Side-strokes that shall pen thy breath up ; urchins

Shall, for that vast of night that they may work,  
All exercise on thee : thou shalt be pinch'd  
As thick as honey-combs, each pinch more stinging  
Than bees that made them.

*Cali.* I must eat my dinner !  
This island's mine, by Sycorax, my mother,  
Which thou tak'st from me. When thou camest first,  
Thou strok'dst me, and mad'st much of me ; would'st give me  
Water with berries in 't ; and teach me how  
To name the bigger light, and how the less  
That burn by day and night : and then I lov'd thee,  
And show'd thee all the qualities o' the isle,  
The fresh springs, brine pits, barren place, and fertile ;  
Cursèd be I that did so ! All the charms  
Of Sycorax, toads, beetles, bats, light on you !  
For I am all the subjects that you have,  
Which first was mine own king ; and here you sty me  
In this hard rock, whilsts you do keep from me  
The rest of the island.

*Pro.* Thou most lying slave,  
Whom stripes may move, not kindness,—I have us'd thee,  
Filth as thou art, with human care ; and lodg'd thee  
In mine own cell, till thou didst seek to violate  
The honor of my child.

*Cali.* O ho, O ho ! would it had been done !  
Thou didst prevent me ; I had peopled else  
This isle with Calibans.

*Pro.* Abhorred slave ;  
Which any print of goodness will not take,  
Being capable of all ill ! I pitied thee,  
Took pains to make thee speak, taught thee each hour  
One thing or other ; when thou didst not, savage,  
Know thine own meaning, but wouldest gabble, like  
A thing most brutish, I endow'd thy purposes  
With words that made them known : but thy vile race,  
Though thou didst learn, had that in 't which good natures  
Could not abide to be with ; therefore wast thou  
Deservedly confin'd into this rock,  
Who hadst deserv'd more than a prison.

*Cali.* You taught me language ; and my profit on't  
Is, *I know how to curse* : the red plague rid you,  
For learning me your language !

*Pro.* Hag-seed, hence !  
Fetch us in fuel ; and be quick, thou wert best,  
To answer other business. Shrug'st thou, malice ?  
If thou neglect'st, or dost unwillingly

What I command, I'll rack thee with old cramps,  
Fill all thy bones with achès; make thee roar,  
That beasts shall tremble at thy din.

*Cali.* No, 'pray thee!  
I must obey: his art is of such power, (*Aside.*)  
It would control my dam's god, Setebos,  
And make a vassal of him.

*Pro.* So, slave; hence!  
[Exit Caliban.

*Re-enter ARIEL, invisible, playing and singing; FERDINAND following him.*

ARIEL'S SONG.

Come unto these yellow sands,  
And then take hands;  
*Courtsied when you have, and kiss'd*  
(The wild waves whist)  
Foot it feately here and there;  
And, sweet sprites, the burden bear.  
Hark, hark!  
*Burthen.* Bowgh, wowgh. (*dispersedly*)  
The watch-dogs bark:  
*Bur.* Bowgh, wowgh.  
Hark, hark! I hear  
The strain of *strutting chanticlere*  
Cry, Cock-a-doodle-doo.

*Fer.* Where should this music be? i' the air, or the earth?  
It sounds no more;—and sure it waits upon  
Some god of the island. Sitting on a bank,  
Weeping again the king my father's wreck,  
This music *crept* by me *upon the waters*;  
Allaying both their fury, and my passion,  
With its sweet air; thence I have follow'd it,  
Or it hath drawn me rather.—But 'tis gone:—  
No, it begins again.

ARIEL sings.

*Full fathom five thy father lies;*  
*Of his bones are coral made;*  
*Those are pearls that were his eyes;*  
*Nothing of him that doth fade,*  
*But doth suffer a sea-change*  
*Into some rich thing and strange.*  
*Sea-nymphs hourly ring his knell;*  
*Hark! now I hear them,—ding, dong, bell.*  
(Burthen, Ding-dong.)

*Fer.* The ditty does remember my drowned father,  
*This is no mortal business, nor no sound*  
*That the earth owes;*—I hear it now above me.

*Pro.* The fringed curtains of thine eye advance,<sup>1</sup>  
 And say, what thou seest yond !

*Mira.* What is 't ? a spirit ?  
 Lord, how it looks about ! Believe, me, sir,  
 It carries a brave form :—but 'tis a spirit.

*Pro.* No, wench ; it eats and sleeps, and hath such senses  
 As we have,—such. This gallant which thou seest,  
 Was in the wreck ; and but he's something stain'd  
 With grief, that's beauty's canker, thou might'st call him  
 A goodly person : he hath lost his fellows,  
 And strays about to find them.

*Mira.* I might call him  
 A thing divine ; for nothing natural  
 I ever saw so noble.

*Pro.* It goes on (*aside*),  
 As my soul prompts it :—Spirit, fine spirit ! I'll free thee  
 Within two days for this.

*Fer.* Most sure, the goddess  
 On whom these airs attend !—Vouchsafe, my prayer  
 May know if you remain upon this island ;  
 And that you will some good instructions give,  
 How I may bear me here. My prime request,  
 Which I do last pronounce, is, *O you wonder !*  
 If you be maid or no ?

*Mira.* No wonder, sir ;  
 But, certainly a maid.

*Fer.* My language ! heavens !  
 I am the best of them that speak this speech,  
 Were I but where 'tis spoken.

*Pro.* How ! the best ?  
 What wert thou, if the King of Naples heard thee ?

*Fer.* A simple thing, as I am now, that wonders  
 To hear thee speak of Naples ; he does hear me ;  
 And, that he does, I weep ; *myself am Naples ;*<sup>2</sup>  
 Who with mine eyes, ne'er since at ebb, beheld  
 The king my father wreck'd.

*Mira.* Alack for mercy !  
*Fer.* Yes, faith, and all his lords ; the Duke of Milan,  
 And his brave son, being twain.

*Pro. (aside.)* The Duke of Milan,  
 And his more braver daughter, could control thee,  
 If now 'twere fit to do 't.—At the first sight  
*They have chang'd eyes !*—Delicate Ariel (*aside*),  
 I'll set thee free for this !

<sup>1</sup> *The fringed curtains of thine eye advance.*

Why Shakspeare should have condescended to the elaborate nothingness, not to say nonsense of this metaphor (for what is meant by advancing “ curtains ?”) I cannot conceive ; that is to say, if he did condescend ; for it looks very like the interpolation of some pompous, declamatory player. Pope has put it into his treatise on the Bathos.

<sup>2</sup> *“ Myself am Naples.”*—This is a very summary and kingly style. Shakspeare is fond of it. “ How, now, France ?” says King John to King Philip, “ I’m dying, Egypt !” says Antony to Cleopatra.

### MACBETH AND THE WITCHES.

This scene fortunately comprises a summary of the whole subsequent history of Macbeth.

*A dark Cave. In the middle, a Caldron boiling. Thunder.  
Enter three Witches.*

*1st Wi.* Thrice the brinded cat hath mew’d,

*2nd Wi.* Thrice and once the hedge-pig whin’d,

*3rd Wi.* Harper cries :—’Tis time, ’tis time.

*1st Wi.* Round about the caldron go ;

In the poison’d entrails throw.

*Toad, that under cold stone*

*Days and nights has, thirty-one,*

*Swelter’d venom sleeping got,*

Boil thou first i’ the charmèd pot !

*All*      *Double, double, toil and trouble ;*  
*Fire, burn ; and, caldron, bubble.*

*2nd Wi.* Fillet of a fenny snake,

In the caldron boil and bake :

Eye of newt, and toe of frog,

Wool of bat, and tongue of dog,

Adder’s fork, and blind-worm’s sting,

Lizard’s leg, and owlet’s wing,

For a charm of powerful trouble ;

*Like a hell-broth, boil and bubble.*

*All.* Double, double, toil and trouble ;  
Fire, burn ; and, caldron, bubble.

*3rd Wi.* Scale of dragon, tooth of wolf ;  
*Witches' mummy ; maw, and gulf,*  
*Of the ravin'd salt-sea shark ;*  
Root of hemlock, digg'd i' the dark :  
*Liver of blaspheming Jew ;*  
Gall of goat, and slips of yew,  
*Sliver'd in the moon's eclipse ;*  
*Nose of Turk, and Tartar's lips ;*  
*Finger of birth-strangled babe,*  
*Ditch-deliver'd by a drab ;*  
*Make the gruel thick and slab ;*  
Add thereto a tiger's chaudron,  
For the ingredients of our caldron.

*All.* Double, double, toil and trouble,  
Fire, burn ; and, caldron, bubble.

*2nd Wi.* Cool it with a baboon's blood.

*Enter HECATE and the three other WITCHES*

*Hec.* O, well done ! I commend your pains ;  
And every one shall share i' the gains,  
And now about the caldron sing,  
Like elves and fairies in a ring,  
Enchanting all that you put in.

(Music and a Song, Black Spirits, &c.)

*2nd Wi.* By the pricking of my thumbs,  
*Something wicked this way comes :—*  
Open, locks, whoever knocks.

*Enter MACBETH.*

*Mac.* How now, you secret, black, and midnight hags,  
What is't you do ?

*All.* A deed without a name.

*Mac.* I conjure you, by that which you profess  
(Howe'er you come to know it), answer me :  
Though you untie the winds, and let them *fight*  
*Against the churches :* though the yesty waves  
Confound and swallow navigation up ;  
Though bladed corn be lodg'd, and trees blown down ;  
Though castles topple on their warders' heads ;  
Though palaces and pyramids do slope  
Their heads to their foundations ; though the treasure  
Of nature's germins tumble all together,  
Even till destruction sicken, answer me  
To what I ask you.

*1st Wi.* Speak.

*2nd Wi.* Demand.

*3rd Wi.* We'll answer.

*1st Wi.* Say, if thou'dst rather hear it from our mouths,  
Or from our masters'?

*Mac.* Call them, let me see them.

*1st Wi.* Pour in sow's blood, that hath eaten  
*Her nine farrow ; grease, that's sweaten*  
*From the murderer's gibbet, throw*  
Into the flame.

*All.* Come, high or low ;  
Thyself, and office, deftly show.

*Thunder.* An Apparition of an armed Head rises.

*Mac.* Tell me, thou unknown power,—

*1st Wi.* He knows thy thought ;  
Hear his speech, but say thou naught.

*App.* Macbeth ! Macbeth ! Macbeth ! beware Macduff ;  
Beware the Thane of Fife.—*Dismiss me* ;—Enough.

(*Descends.*)

*Mac.* Whate'er thou art, for thy good caution thanks ;  
Thou hast harp'd my fear aright :—But one word more ;—

*1st Wi.* He will not be commanded. Here's another,  
More potent than the first.

*Thunder.* An Apparition of a bloody Child rises.<sup>3</sup>

*App.* Macbeth ! Macbeth ! Macbeth !—

*Mac.* Had I three ears, I'd hear thee

*App.* Be bloody, bold, and resolute ; laugh to scorn  
The power of man, for none of woman born  
Shall harm Macbeth.

*Mac.* Then live, Macduff : what need I fear of thee ?  
But yet I'll make assurance doubly sure,  
And take a bond of fate : thou shalt not live ;  
That I may tell pale-hearted fear it lies,  
*And sleep in spite of thunder.*—What is this ?

*Thunder.* An Apparition of a Child crowned, with a tree in his hand,  
rises.

That rises like the issue of a king ;  
And wears upon his baby-brow the round  
And top of sovereignty !

*All.* Listen, but speak not to 't.

*App.* Be lion-mettled, proud ; and take no care  
Who chafes, who frets, or where conspirers are ;  
Macbeth shall never vanquish'd be, until

Great Birnam wood to high Dunsinane hill  
Shall come against him.

(*Descends.*)

*Mac.* That will never be;  
Who can impress the forest; bid the tree  
Unfix his earth-bound root? sweet bodements! good!  
Rebellious head, rise never, till the wood  
Of Birnam rise, and our high-plac'd Macbeth  
Shall live the lease of nature, pay his breath  
To time, and mortal custom.—Yet my heart  
Throbs to know one thing; Tell me (if your art  
Can tell so much) shall Banquo's issue ever  
Reign in the kingdom?

*All.* Seek to know no more.

*Mac.* I will be satisfied; deny me this  
And an eternal curse fall on you! Let me know:—  
Why sinks that caldron? and what noise is this?

(*Hautboys.*)

*1st Wi.* Show!

*2nd Wi.* Show!

*3rd Wi.* Show!

*All.* Show his eyes and grieve his heart,  
Come like shadows, so depart.

*Eight Kings appear, and pass over the stage in order; the last with a glass in his hand; Banquo following.*

*Mac.* Thou art too like the spirit of Banquo; down!  
*Thy crown does sear mine eyeballs:*—And thy hair,  
Thou other gold-bound brow is like the first;—  
A third is like the former;—Filthy hags!  
Why do you show me this? a fourth? Start, eyes!  
What! will the line stretch out to the crack of doom?  
Another yet?—A seventh?—I'll see no more:  
And yet the eighth appears, who bears a glass  
Which shows me many more; and some I see,  
That two-fold balls and treble sceptres carry:  
Horrible sight!—Now, I see, 'tis true;  
For the *blood-bolter'd Banquo smiles upon me,*  
*And points at them for his.*—What, is this so?

*1st Wi.* Aye, sir, all this is so:—But why  
Stands Macbeth thus amazedly?  
Come, sisters, cheer we up his sprites,  
And show the best of our delights:  
I'll charm the air to give a sound,  
While you perform your antique round:

That this great king may kindly say,  
Our duties did his welcome pay.

(*Music. The Witches dance, and vanish.*)

*Mac.* Where are they? Gone?—Let this pernicious hour,  
Stand aye accursèd in the calendar!—  
Come in, without there!

*Enter LENOX.*

*Len.* What's your grace's will?

*Mac.* Saw you the weird sisters?

*Len.* No, indeed, my lord.

*Mac.* Infected be the air whereon they ride;  
And damn'd all those that trust them!—I did hear  
The galloping of horse; who was't came by?

*Len.* 'Tis two or three, my lord, that bring you word,  
Macduff is fled to England.

*Mac.* Fled to England?

*Len.* Ay, my good lord.

*Mac.* Time, thou anticipat'st my dread exploits:  
The flighty purpose never is o'ertook,  
Unless the deed go with it: From this moment,  
The very firstlings of my heart shall be  
The firstlings of my hand. And even now  
To crown my thoughts with acts, be it thought and done:  
This castle of Macduff I will surprise;  
Seize upon Fife; give to the edge o' the sword  
His wife, his babes, and all unfortunate souls  
That trace him in his line. No boasting like a fool;  
This deed I'll do before this purpose cool;  
*But no more sights!*<sup>14</sup>—Where are these gentlemen?  
Come, bring me where they are.

(*Exeunt.*)

<sup>14</sup> “Apparition of a bloody child.”—The idea of a “bloody child,” and of his being more potent than the armed head, and one of the *masters* of the witches, is very dreadful. So is that of the child crowned, with a tree in his hand. They impersonate, it is true, certain results of the war, the destruction of Macduff’s children, and the succession of Banquo’s; but the imagination does not make these reflections at first; and the dreadfulness still remains, of potent demons speaking in the shapes of children.

“*But no more sights.*”—What a world of horrors is in this little familiar phrase!

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## THE QUARREL OF OBERON AND TITANIA.

### A FAIRY DRAMA.

I have ventured to give the extract this title, because it not only contains the whole story of the fairy part of the Midsummer Night’s Dream, but by the omission of a few lines, and the transposition of one small passage (for which I beg the reader’s indulgence), it actually forms a separate little play. It is nearly such in the greater play; and its isolation was easily, and not at all injuriously effected, by the separation of the Weaver from his brother mechanicals.

*Enter Oberon at one door with his train; and Titania at another with hers.*

*Ober.* Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania.

*Tit.* What! jealous Oberon? Fairies, skip hence;  
I have forsworn his bed and company.

*Ober.* Tarry, rash wanton; am not I thy lord?

*Tit.* Then I must be thy lady; but I know  
When thou hast stol’n away from fairy-land,  
And in the shape of Corin sat all day  
Playing on pipes of corn, and versing love  
To amorous Phillida. Why art thou here.

*Come from the furthest steep of India,*<sup>5</sup>  
But that, forsooth, the bouncing Amazon,  
Your buskin’d mistress, and your warrior love,  
To Theseus must be wedded; and you come  
To give their bed joy and prosperity?

*Ober.* How canst thou thus, for shame, Titania,  
Glance at my credit with Hippolyta,  
Knowing I know thy love to Theseus?  
Didst thou not lead him through the glimmering night  
From Perigenia, whom he ravished?  
And make him with fair *Æglé* break his faith,

With Ariadne, and Antiope ?

*Tit.* These are the forgeries of jealousy :  
 And never since the middle summer's spring,  
 Met we on hill, in dale, forest, or mead,  
 By pavèd fountain, or by rushing brook,  
 Or on the beached margent of the sea,  
*To dance our ringlets to the whistling wind,*  
 But in thy brawls thou hast disturbed our sport.  
 Therefore the winds, piping to us in vain,  
 As in revenge, have suck'd up from the sea  
 Contagious fogs ; which falling on the land,  
 Have every pelting river made so proud,  
 That they have overborne their continents ;  
 The ox hath therefore stretch'd his yoke in vain,  
 The ploughman lost his sweat, and the green corn  
 Hath rotted, *ere his youth attain'd a beard :*  
 The fold stands empty in the drownèd field,  
 And crows are fatted with the murrain flock ;  
 The nine men's morris\* is fill'd up with mud ;  
 And the quaint mazes in the wanton green,  
 For lack of tread, are undistinguishable ;  
 The *human mortals* want their winter here ;  
 No night is now with hymn or carol blest :  
 Therefore the moon, the governess of floods,  
*Pale in her anger, washes all the air,*  
 That rheumatic diseases do abound :  
 And thorough this distemperature, we see  
 The seasons alter : *hoary-headed frosts*  
*Fall in the fresh lap of the crimson rose ;*  
 And on old Hyems' chin, and icy crown,  
 An odorous chaplet of sweet summer buds  
 Is, as in mockery, set. The spring, the summer,  
 The chilling autumn, angry winter, change  
 Their wonted liveries ; and the mazed world,  
 By their increase, now knows not which is which :  
 And this same progeny of evils comes  
 From our debate, from our dissension :  
 We are their parents and original.

*Ober.* Do you amend it then : it lies in you :  
 Why should Titian cross her Oberon ?  
 I do but beg a little changeling boy,  
 To be my henchman,†

\* *Nine men's morris.*—A rustic game, played with stones upon lines cut in the ground.

† *Henchman*—Page.

*Tit.* Set your heart at rest ;  
 The fairy land buys not the child of me.  
 His mother was a vot'ress of my order ;  
 And, *in the spiced Indian air*, by night,  
 Full often hath she gossip'd by my side ;  
 And sat with me on Neptune's yellow sands,  
 Marking the embarking traders on the flood ;  
 When we have laughed to see the sails conceive  
 And grow big-bellied with the wanton wind :  
 Which she with pretty and with swimming gait  
 (Following her womb, then rich with my young squire)  
 Would imitate ; and sail upon the land,  
 To fetch me trifles and return again,  
 As from a voyage, rich with merchandize.  
 But she, being mortal, of that boy did die ;  
 And, for her sake, I do rear up her boy :  
 And, for her sake, I will not part with him.

*Ober.* How long within this wood intend you stay ?

*Tit.* Perchance till after Theseus' wedding-day.

If you will patiently dance in our round,  
 And see our moonlight revels, go with us ;  
 If not, shun me, and I will spare your haunts.

*Ober.* Give me that boy, and I will go with thee.

*Tit.* Not for thy fairy kingdom.—Fairies, away :  
 We shall chide down-right, if I longer stay.

[*Exeunt TITANIA and her train.*

*Ober.* Well, go thy way : thou shalt not from this grove,  
 Till I torment thee for this injury.—  
 My gentle Puck, come hither. Thou remember'st  
*Since once I sat upon a promontory,*  
*And heard a mermaid on a dolphin's back,*  
*Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath,*  
*That the rude sea grew civil at her song ;*  
*And certain stars shot madly from their spheres,*  
*To hear the sea-maid's music.*

*Puck.* I remember,

*Ober.* *That very night I saw (but thou couldst not),*  
*Flying between the cold moon and the earth,*  
*Cupid all arm'd : a certain aim he took*  
*At a fair vestal, thronèd by the west,\**  
*And loos'd his love-shaft smartly from his bow,*

\* *At a fair vestal, thronèd by the west.*—An allusion to Queen Elizabeth. See in the Rev. Mr. Halpin's remarks on this passage, published by the Shakspeare Society, a most ingenious speculation on the hidden meaning of it, as a bit of secret court history.

*As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts :*  
 But I might seen young Cupid's fiery shaft  
*Quench'd in the chaste beams of the wat'ry moon :*  
*And the imperial votaress pass'd on,*  
*In maiden meditation, fancy free.*  
 Yet mark'd I where the bolt of Cupid fell ;  
 It fell upon a little western flower,—  
 Before milk-white ; now purple with love's wound,  
 And maidens call it Love-in-idleness.\*  
 Fetch me that flower : the herb I showed thee once :  
 The juice of it on sleeping eyelids laid,  
 Will make or man or woman madly dote  
 Upon the next live creature that it sees.  
 Fetch me this herb : and be thou here again,  
*Ere the leviathan can swim a league.*

*Puck. I'll put a girdle round about the earth,*  
*In forty minutes.*

[Exit PUCK.]

*Ober.* Having once this juice,  
 I'll watch Titania when she is asleep,  
 And drop the liquor of it in her eyes :  
 The next thing then she waking looks upon  
 (Be it on lion, bear, or wolf, or bull,  
 Or meddling monkey, or on busy ape),  
 She shall pursue it with *the soul of love*,  
 And ere I take this charm off from her sight  
 (As I can take it with another herb),  
 I'll make her render up her page to me.

[Exit OBERON]

*Another part of the Wood.*

*Enter TITANIA and her train.*

*Tit.* Come, now a roundel, and a fairy song ;  
 Then, *for the third part of a minute*, hence ;  
*Some, to kill cankers in the musk-rose buds ;*  
*Some, war with rear mice for their leathern wings,*  
*To make my small elves' coats* ; and some keep back  
 The clamorous owl, *that nightly hoots, and wonders*  
*At our quaint spirits* : Sing me now asleep ;  
 Then to your offices, and let me rest.

\* *Love-in-idleness.*—The heart's-ease

## SONG

*1st Fai.* You spotted snakes with double tongue,  
Thorny hedge-hogs, be not seen.

Newts and blind worms, do no wrong ;  
Come not near our fairy queen.

*Chorus.* Philomel with melody  
Sing in our sweet lullaby,  
Lulla, lulla, lullaby : lulla, lulla, lullaby ;  
Never harm, nor spell, nor charm,  
Come our lovely lady nigh ;  
So, good night—with lullaby.

*2d Fai.* Weaving spiders, come not here ;  
Hence you long-legged spinners, hence :  
Beetles black, approach not near ;  
Worm nor snail, do no offence.

*Chorus.* Philomel with melody, &c.

*1st Fai.* Hence, away ; now all is well :  
One, aloof, stand sentinel.

[*Exeunt FAIRIES.* TITANIA sleeps.]

## Enter OBERON.

*Ober.*—What thou seest when thou dost awake

[*Squeezes the flower on Titania's eyelids.*

Do it for thy true love take ;  
Love and languish for his sake :  
Be it ounce, or cat, or bear,  
Pard, or boar with bristled hair,  
In thy eye that shall appear  
When thou wak'st, it is thy dear ;  
Wake, when some vile thing is near.

[*Exit.*

*Enter BOTTOM, singing ; PUCK having clapt on him an ass's head*

## SONG.

*Bot.* The ousel-cock, so black of hue,  
With orange-tawny bill,  
The throstle with his note so true,  
The wren with little quill—

*Tit.* What angel wakes me from my flowery bed ?

[*Wakes.*

I pray thee, gentle mortal, sing again ;  
Mine ear is much enamor'd of thy note ;

So is mine eye enthralled to thy shape ;  
 And thy *fair virtue's* force perforce doth move me,  
 On the first view, to say, to swear, I love thee.

*Bot.* Methinks, mistress, you should have little reason for that, and yet to say the truth, reason and love keep little company together now-a-days. The more the pity that some honest neighbors will not make them friends. Nay, I can gleek\* upon occasion.

*Tit.* Thou art as wise as thou art beautiful.

*Bot.* Not so neither ; but if I had wit enough to get out of this wood, I have enough to serve mine own turn.

*Tit.* Out of this wood do not desire to go :

Thou shalt remain here, whether thou wilt or no.  
 I am a spirit of no common rate ;  
 The summer still doth tend upon my state,  
 And I do love thee ; therefore go with me ;  
 I'll give thee fairies to attend on thee ;  
 And they shall fetch thee jewels from the deep,  
 And sing, while thou on pressèd flowers dost sleep :  
 And I will purge thy mortal grossness so,  
 That thou shalt like an airy spirit go,  
 Peas-blossom ! Cobweb ! Moth ! and Mustard-seed !

#### Enter four Fairies.

*1st Fai.* Ready.

*2nd Fai.* And I.

*3rd Fai.* And I.

*4th Fai.* Where shall we go ?

*Tit.* Be kind and courteous to this gentleman ;  
*Hop in his walks, and gambol in his eyes ;*  
*Feed him with apricocks and dewberries,*  
*With purple grapes, green figs, and mulberries :*  
*The honey-bags steal from the humble-bees,*  
*And for night tapers crop their waxen thighs,*  
*And light them at the fiery glow-worm's eyes,*  
*To have my love to bed, and to arise :*  
*And pluck the wings from painted butterflies,*  
*To fan the moon-beams from his sleeping eyes ;*  
*Nod to him, elves, and do him courtesies.*

*1st Fai.* Hail, mortal !

*2nd Fai.* Hail !

*3rd Fai.* Hail !

*4th Fai.* Hail !

*Bot.* I cry your worship's mercy, heartily. I beseech your worship's name.

\* *Gleek.*—Banter.

*Cob.* Cobweb.

*Bot.* I shall desire you of more acquaintance, good Master Cobweb. *If I cut my finger, I shall make bold with you.* Your name, honest gentleman?

*Peas.* Peas-blossom.

*Bot.* I pray you commend me to Mistress Squash, your mother, and to Master Peascod, your father. Good Master Peas-Blossom, I shall desire you of more acquaintance too. Your name, I beseech you, sir?

*Mus.* Mustard-seed.

*Bot.* Good Master Mustard-seed, I know your patience well. *That same cowardly, giant-like ox-beef hath devoured many gentlemen of your house.* I promise you your kindred hath made my eyes water ere now. I desire you more acquaintance, good Master Mustard-seed.

OBERON enters unseen.

*Tit.* Come, sit thee down upon this flowery bed,  
While I thy *amiable cheeks* do coy  
And stick musk-roses in thy sleek smooth head,  
*And kiss thy fair large ears, my gentle joy.*

*Bot.* Where's Peas-blossom?

*Peas.* Ready.

*Bot.* *Scratch my head,* Peas-blossom. Where's Monsieur Cobweb

*Cob.* Ready.

*Bot.* Monsieur Cobweb, good monsieur, get up your weapons in your hands, and kill me *a red-hipped humble bee on the top of a thistle*; and, good monsieur, bring me the honey-bag. *Do not fret yourself too much with the action, monsieur;* and, good monsieur, have a care the honey-bag break not; *I would be loth to have you overflowed with a honey-bag,* signior.—Where's Monsieur Mustard-seed?

*Must.* Ready.

*Bot.* Give me your neif,\* Monsieur Mustard-seed. Pray you, leave your courtesy, good monsieur.

*Must.* What's your will?

*Bot.* Nothing, good monsieur, but to help Cavaliero Cobweb to scratch. I must to the barber's, monsieur; *for methinks I am marvellous hairy about the face;* and I am such a tender ass, if my hair do but tickle me I must scratch.

*Tit.* What, wilt thou hear some music, my sweet love?

*Bot.* I have a reasonable ear in music: let us have *the tongs and the bones*

*Tit.* Or say, sweet love, what thou desirest to eat.

*Bot.* Truly a peck of provender. I could munch your *good dry oats.* Methinks I have a great desire to a bottle of hay. Good hay, sweet hay, hath no fellow.

\* *Neif.*—Fist.

*Tit* I have a venturous fairy, that shall seek the squirrel's hoard, and fetch thee new nuts.

*Bot.* *I had rather have a handful or two of dried peas* :—but, I pray you, let none of your people stir me; I have an exposition of sleep come upon me.

*Tit.* Sleep thou, and I will wind thee in my arms.

Fairies, begone, and be all ways away.

So doth the woodbine the sweet honeysuckle

Gently entwist ;— the female ivy so

Enrings *the barky fingers* of the elm.

O, how I love thee ! How I dote on thee !

[*They sleep.*

OBERON advances. Enter PUCK.

*Ober.* Welcome, good Robin. See'st thou this sweet sight ?

Her dotage now I do begin to pity :

For meeting her of late behind the wood,

Seeking sweet savors for this hateful fool,

I did upbraid her, and fall out with her :

For she his hairy temples then had rounded

With coronet of fresh and fragrant flowers ;

And that same dew, which sometimes on the buds

Was wont to swell, like round and orient pearls,

Stood now within the pretty flowret's eyes,

Like tears, that did their own disgrace bewail.

When I had, at my pleasure, taunted her,

And she, in mild tones, begged my patience,

I then did ask of her my changeling child ;

Which straight she gave me, and her fairy sent

To bear him to my bower in fairy land.

And now I have the boy, I will undo

*This hateful imperfection of her eyes.*

And, gentle Puck, take this transformèd scalp

From off the head of this Athenian swain ;

That she awaking when the other do,

May all to Athens back again repair,

And think no more of this night's accidents,

*But as the fierce vexation of a dream.\**

But first, I will release the fairy queen.

Be as thou wert wont to be ;

(*Touching her eyes with a herb*)

See, as thou were wont to see ;

Dian's bud o'er Cupid's flower

\* *But as the fierce vexation of a dream.*—This fine stray verse comes looking in among the rest like a stern face through flowers.

Hath such force and blessed power.  
Now, my Titania ; wake you, my sweet queen.

*Tit.* My Oberon ! what visions have I seen !  
Methought I was enamored of an ass.

*Ober.* There lies your love.

*Tit.* How came these things to pass ?  
O, how mine eyes do loathe his visage now !

*Ober.* Silence awhile. Robin, take off this head.—  
Titania, music call ; and strike more dead  
Than common sleep, of all these five the sense.

*Tit.* Music ! ho ! music ! such as charmeth sleep.

*Puck.* Now, when thou wak'st, with thine own fool's eyes peep.

*Ober.* Sound music ! [still music.] Come, my queen, take hand  
with me,

*And rock the ground whereon these sleepers be.*

Now thou and I are new in amity,  
And will to-morrow midnight, solemnly  
Dance in Duke Theseus' house triumphantly,  
And bless it to all fair posterity :  
There shall the pairs of faithful lovers be  
Wedded, with Theseus, all in jollity.

*Puck.* Fairy king, attend and mark ;  
I do hear the morning lark.

*Ober.* Then, my queen, in silence sad,\*  
Trip we after the night's shade.  
We the globe can compass soon,  
Swifter than the wandering moon.

*Tit.* Come, my lord, and in our flight  
Tell me how it came this night,  
That I sleeping here was found  
With these mortals on the ground.

[*Exeunt.*

[*Horns sound within.*

<sup>5</sup> *Come from the farthest steep of India.*

Shakspeare understood the charm of *remoteness* in poetry, as he did everything else. Oberon has been dancing on the sunny steeps looking towards Cathay, where the

— Chinese drive  
Their cany waggons light.

\* *Sad.*—Grave, serious (not melancholy).

## THE BRIDAL HOUSE BLESSED BY THE FAIRIES.

*Enter PUCK.*

*Puck.* Now the hungry lion roars,<sup>6</sup>  
 And the wolf behowls the moon,  
 While the heavy ploughman snores,  
 All with weary task fordone.  
 Now the wasted brands do glow,  
 Whilst the scritch-owl scritchng loud,  
*Puts the wretch that lies in wo,*  
*In remembrance of a shroud.*  
 Now it is the time of night  
*That the graves all gaping wide,*  
*Every one lets forth his sprite,*  
*In the churchway paths to glide:*  
 And we fairies that do run  
 By the triple Hecate's team,  
 From the presence of the sun,  
*Following darkness like a dream,*  
 Now are frolick; not a mouse  
 Shall disturb this hallow'd house:  
 I am sent, with broom before,  
 To sweep the dust behind the door.

*Enter OBERON and TITANIA, with their train.*

*Ober.* Through this house give glimmering light  
*By the dead and drowsy fire:*  
 Every elf and fairy sprite,  
*Hop as light as bird from brier;*  
 And this ditty after me  
 Sing and dance it trippingly.  
*Tita.* First rehearse this song by rote:  
 To each word a warbling note,  
 Hand in hand, with fairy grace,  
 Will we sing and bless the place.

## SONG AND DANCE

*Ober.* Now, until the break of day,  
 Through the house each fairy stray,

To the best bride-bed will we,  
Which by us shall blessed be ;  
And the issue there create  
Ever shall be fortunate.  
So shall all the couples three,  
Ever true in loving be ;  
And the blots of Nature's hand  
Shall not in their issue stand ;  
Never mole, hare-lip or scar  
Nor mark prodigious, such as are  
Despisèd in nativity,  
Shall upon their children be.  
With this field-dew, consecrate,  
Every fairy take his gait ;  
And each several chamber bless  
Through this palace with sweet peace ;  
E'er shall it in safety rest,  
And the owner of it blest.  
Trip away ;  
Make no stay :  
Meet me all by break of day.

“Now the hungry lion roars :”—Upon the songs of Puck and Oberon, Coleridge exclaims, “Very Anacreon in perfectness, proportion, and spontaneity ! So far it is Greek ; but then add, O ! what wealth, what wild rangings and yet what compression and condensation of English fancy ! In truth, there is nothing in Anacreon more perfect than these thirty lines, or half so rich and imaginative. They form a speckless diamond.”—*Literary Remains*, vol. ii., p. 114.

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## LOVERS AND MUSIC.

*LORENZO and JESSICA, awaiting the return home of PORTIA and NE-RISSA, discourse of music, and then welcome with it the bride and her attendant.*

*Lor.* The moon shines bright. *In such a night as this,*?  
*When the sweet wind did gently kiss the trees,*

*And they did make no noise,—in such a night  
Troilus, methinks, mounted the Trojan walls,  
And sighed his soul towards the Grecian tents,<sup>8</sup>  
Where Cressid lay that night.*

*Jes.* *In such a night*  
Did Thisbe fearfully o'ertrip the dew ;  
*And saw the lion's shadow ere himself,*<sup>9</sup>  
And ran dismay'd away.

*Lor.* *In such a night*  
Stood Dido with a willow in her hand<sup>10</sup>  
Upon the wild sea-banks, and wav'd her love  
To come again to Carthage.

*Jes.* *In such a night*  
Medea gather'd the enchanted herbs<sup>11</sup>  
That did renew old Æson.

*Lor.* *In such a night*  
Did Jessica steal from the wealthy Jew ;  
And with an unthrift love did run from Venice,  
As far as Belmont.

*Jes.* *And in such a night*  
Did young Lorenzo swear he lov'd her well ;  
Stealing her soul with many vows of faith,  
And ne'er a true one.

*Lor.* *And in such a night*  
Did pretty Jessica, like a little shrew,  
Slander her love, *and he forgave it her.*

*Jes.* I would out-night you, did nobody come ;  
But, hark ; I hear the footing of a man.

*Enter STEPHANO.*

*Lor.* Who comes so fast in silence of the night ?

*Step.* A friend.

*Lor.* A friend ! what friend ? your name, I pray you, friend ?

*Step.* Stephano is my name ; and I bring word  
My mistress will, before the break of day,  
Be here at Belmont : she doth stray about  
By holy crosses, where she kneels and prays  
For happy wedlock hours.

*Lor.* Who comes with her ?

*Step.* None but a holy hermit and her maid.

*Lor.* Sweet soul, let 's in, and there expect their coming.  
And yet no matter ; why should we go in ?  
My friend Stephano, signify, I pray you,  
Within the house, your mistress is at hand ;  
And bring your music forth into the air.

[*Exit STEPHANO.*]

*How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon the bank !  
 Here will we sit, and let the sounds of music  
 Creep into our ears ; soft stillness and the night,  
 Become the touches of sweet harmony.  
 Sit, Jessica : look, how the floor of heaven  
 Is thick inlaid with patines\* of bright gold ;  
 There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st,<sup>12</sup>  
 But in her motion like an angel sings,  
 Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubims ;  
 Such harmony is in immortal souls ;  
 But, whilst this muddy vesture of decay  
 Doth grossly close us in, we cannot hear it.*

*Enter MUSICIANS.*

Come, ho ! and wake Diana with a hymn ;  
 With sweetest touches pierce your mistress' ear,  
*And draw her home with music.*

[*Music.*]

*Jes.* I am never merry when I hear sweet music.

*Lor.* The reason is, your spirits are attentive :  
 For do but note a wild and wanton herd,  
 A race of youthful and unhandled colts,  
*Fetching mad bounds*,—bellowing and neighing loud,  
 Which is the hot condition of their blood ;  
 If they but hear, perchance, a trumpet sound,  
 Or any air of music touch their ears,  
 You shall perceive them make a mutual stand—  
*Their savage eyes turned to a modest gaze*  
 By the sweet power of music. Therefore the poet  
 Did feign that Orpheus drew trees, stones, and floods,  
 Since naught so stockish, hard, and full of rage,  
 But music for the time doth change its nature.  
*The man that hath no music in himself,*  
*Nor is not mov'd with concord of sweet sounds,*  
*Is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils ;*  
*The motions of his spirit are dull as night,*  
*And his affections dark as Erebus :*  
*Let no such man be trusted.*—Mark the music.

\* *Patines* (Pátine, Paténe, *Ital.*) have been generally understood to mean plates of gold or silver used in the Catholic service. A new and interesting commentator, however (the Rev. Mr. Hunter), is of opinion that the proper word is *patterns*.

*Enter PORTIA and NERISSA, at a distance.*

*Por.* That light we see is burning in my hall ;  
*How far that little candle throws its beams !*  
*So shines a good deed in a naughty world.*

*Ner.* When the moon shone, we did not see the candle  
*Por.* So doth the greater glory dim the less :

A substitute shines brightly as a king,  
Until a king be by ; *and then his state*  
*Empties himself*, as doth the inland brook  
Into the main of waters. Music ! hark !

*Ner.* It is your music, madam, of the house  
*Por.* Nothing is good I see without respect ;  
Methinks it sounds much sweeter than by day.

*Ner.* Silence bestows that virtue on it, madam.

*Por.* The crow doth sing as sweetly as the lark,  
When neither is attended ; and, I think,  
The nightingale, if she should sing by day,  
When every goose is cackling, would be thought  
No better a musician than the wren.

How many things by season, season'd are,  
To their right praise, and true perfection !

*Peace, hoa ! the moon sleeps with Endymion,*  
*And would not be awak'd !*

[Music ceases.]

*Lor.* That is the voice,  
Or I am much deceiv'd, of Portia.

*Por.* He knows me, as the blind man knows the cuckoo,  
By the bad voice.

*Lor.* Dear lady, welcome home.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>7</sup> “ *In such a night as this,*” &c.—All the stories here alluded to,—Troilus and Cressida, Pyramus and Thisbe, Dido and Aeneas, Jason and Medea, are in Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*. It is pleasant to see our great poet so full of his predecessor. He cannot help, however, inventing particulars not to be found in his original.

<sup>8</sup> *And sigh'd his soul, &c.*

“ The day go'th fast, *and after that came eve,*  
*And yet came not Troilus to Crescid :*  
He looketh forth by hedge, by tree, by greve (grove),  
*And far his head over the wall he laid.”*

Clarke's Chaucer, vol. ii., p. 151.

<sup>9</sup> “ *And saw the lion's shadow.*”—Thisbe in Chaucer does not see

the shadow before she sees the beast (a fine idea !); nor does she in Ovid. In both poets it is a lioness seen by moonlight.

“With bloody mouth, of strangling of a beast.”

Cæde leæna boum spumantes oblita rictus.

*Metam.*, lib. iv., v. 97.

10 “*Stood Dido with a willow in her hand.*”—The willow, a symbol of being forsaken, is not in Chaucer. It looks as if Shakspeare had seen it in a picture, where it would be more necessary than in a poem.

11 “*Medea gather'd the enchanted herbs.*”—Shakspeare has here gone from Chaucer to Gower. Warton, in his *Observations on the Faerie Queene*, vol. i., p. 361, edit. 1807, has noticed a passage in Gower’s story, full of imagination. The poet is speaking of Medea going out upon the business noticed by Shakspeare.

Thus it fell upon a night,  
When there was naught but starrie light,  
She was vanish’d right as she list,  
That no wight but herself wist,  
And that was at midnight tide.

*The world was still on every side.*  
*With open head and foot all bare;*  
*Her hair too spread, she ’gan to fare;*  
Upon her clothés girt she was,  
*And speecheless, upon the grass,*  
*She glode\* forth, as an adder doth.*

12 “*There’s not the smallest orb.*”—The “warbler of wood-notes wild” has here manifestly joined with Plato and other learned spirits to suggest to Milton his own account of the Music of the Spheres, which every reader of taste, I think, must agree with Mr. Knight in thinking “less perfect in sentiment and harmony.”—*Pictorial Shakspeare*, vol. ii., p. 448. The best thing in it is what is observed by Warton: that the listening to the spheres is the recreation of the Genius of the Wood (the speaker) after his day’s duty, “when the world is locked up in sleep and silence.”

\* *Glode*, is glided. If Chaucer’s contemporary had written often thus, his name would have been as famous.

Then listen I

To the celestial Sirens' harmony,  
 That sit upon the nine infolded spheres,  
 And sing to those that hold the vital shears,  
 And turn the adamantine spindle round,  
 On which the fate of gods and men is wound.  
 Such sweet compulsion doth in music lie  
 To lull the daughters of Necessity,  
 And keep unsteady Nature in her law,  
 And the low world in measur'd motion draw  
 After the heavenly tune, which none can hear  
 Of human mould, with gross unpurged ear.

*Arcades*, v. 62.

The best account I remember to have read of the Music of the Spheres is in the History of Music by Hawkins.

<sup>13</sup> “*Dear lady, welcome home.*”—Never was a sweeter or more fitting and bridal elegance, than in the whole of this scene, in which gladness and seriousness prettily struggle, each alternately yielding predominance to the other. The lovers are at once in heaven and earth. The new bride is “drawn home” with the soul of love in the shape of music ; and to keep her giddy spirits down, she preached that little womanly sermon upon a good deed shining in a “*naughty* world.” The whole play is, in one sense of the word, the most picturesque in feeling of all Shakspeare’s. The sharp and malignant beard of the Jew (himself not unreconciled to us by the affections) comes harmlessly against the soft cheek of love.



### ANTONY AND THE CLOUDS.

*Ant.* Eros, thou yet behold’st me ?

*Eros.* Ay, noble lord.

*Ant.* Sometime we see a cloud that’s dragonish :

A vapor sometime ; like a bear, or lion,

A tower’d citadel, a pendant rock,

A forked mountain, or blue promontory

With trees upon’t that nod unto the world,

And mock our eyes with air ; thou hast seen these signs ;

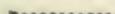
They are black Vesper’s pageants

*Eros.* Ay, my lord.

*Ant* That which is now a horse, even with a thought  
The rack *dislimns*; and makes it indistinct,  
*As water is in water.*

*Eros.* It does, my lord.

*Ant.* My good knave, Eros, now thy captain is  
Even such a body :—here I am,—Antony—  
Yet cannot hold this shape.



## YOUNG WARRIORS.

*Hotspur.* My cousin Vernon ! welcome, by my soul !

*Sir Richard Vernon.* Pray God, my news be worth a welcome, lord  
The Earl of Westmoreland, seven thousand strong,  
Is marching hitherwards ; with him, Prince John.

*Hot.* No harm : what more ?

*Ver.* And further, I have learn'd,—  
The king himself in person is set forth,  
Or hitherwards intended speedily,  
With strong and mighty preparation.

*Hot.* He shall be welcome too. Where is his son,  
The nimble-footed mad-cap Prince of Wales,  
And his comrades, *that daff'd the world aside,*  
*And bid it pass ?*

*Ver.* All furnish'd, all in arms,  
All plum'd like estridges that wing the wind ;  
Bated like eagles having lately bath'd ;  
Glittering in golden coats, like images ;  
*As full of spirit as the month of May*  
*And gorgeous as the sun at midsummer ;*  
Wanton as youthful goats, wild as young bulls,  
I saw young Harry,—with his beaver on,  
His cuises on his thighs, gallantly arm'd,—  
*Rise from the ground like feather'd Mercury,*  
*And vaulted with such ease into his seat,*  
*As if an angel dropp'd down from the clouds,*  
*To turn and wind a fiery Pegasus,*  
*And witch the world with noble horsemanship.*

*Hot.* No more, no more ; worse than the sun in March,  
This praise doth nourish agues. Let them come ;  
*They come like sacrifices in their trim,*  
*And to the fire-ey'd maid of smoky war,*

*All hot, and bleeding, will we offer them ;  
 The mailed Mars shall on his altar sit,  
 Up to the ears in blood. I am on fire,  
 To hear this rich reprisal is so nigh,  
 And yet not ours :—Come, let me take my horse,  
 Who is to bear me, like a thunder-bolt,  
 Against the bosom of the Prince of Wales :  
 Harry to Harry shall, hot (query not ?) horse to horse,<sup>14</sup>  
 Meet, and ne'er part, till one drop down a corse.*

<sup>14</sup> “ *Harry to Harry shall, hot horse to horse.*”—I cannot help thinking that the word *hot* in this line ought to be *not*. “ *Hot horse to horse*” is not a very obvious mode of speech, and it is too obvious an image. The horses undoubtedly would be hot enough. But does not Hotspur mean to say that the usual shock of horses will not be sufficient for the extremity of his encounter with the Prince of Wales ; their own bodies are to be dashed together, and not merely the horses :

~~~~~

¹⁴ Harry to *Harry* shall, *not* horse to horse :
 so closely does he intend that their combat shall *hug*.

IMOGEN IN BED.

(FROM CYMBELINE.)

(*Jachimo, dared by Imogen's husband to make trial of her fidelity, hides in her chamber in order to bring away pretended proofs against it.*)

Imo. (reading in bed.) Who's there ? my woman Helen ?

Lady. Please you, madam.

Imo. What hour is it ?

Lady. Almost midnight, madam.

Imo. I have read three hours then : mine eyes are weak :
 Fold down the leaf where I have left :—to bed :

Take not away the taper ; leave it burning :

And if thou canst awake by four o' the clock,

I prithee, call me. Sleep hath seized me wholly.

[*Exit Lady.*]

To your protection I commend me, Gods !

From fairies, and the tempters of the night,

Guard me, I beseech ye !

[Sleeps. JACHIMO, from the trunk.]

Jach. The crickets sing, and man's o'er-labor'd sense
 Repairs itself by rest : our Tarquin thus
 Did softly press the rushes, ere he waken'd
 The chastity he wounded.—*Cytherea,*
How bravely thou com'st thy bed ! fresh lily,
 And whiter than the sheets ! that I might touch !
 But kiss ; one kiss !—Rubies unparagon'd,
 How dearly they do 't—'Tis her breathing that
Perfumes the chamber thus :—the flame o' the taper
Bows towards her ; and would under-peep her lids,
To see the enclosed lights ; now canopied
Under those windows, white and azure, lac'd
With blue of heaven's own tint. But my design
 To note the chamber,—I will write all down :
 Such and such pictures :—there the window : such
 The adornment of her bed :—the arras, figures,
 Why, such and such,—and the contents o' the story.
 Ah, but some natural notes about her body
 Above ten thousand meaner movables
 Would testify, to enrich mine inventory.
 O sleep, thou ape of Death, lie dull upon her !
 And be her sense but as a monument,
 Thus in a chapel lying !—Come off, come off;

[Takes off her bracelet.]

As slippery, as the Gordian knot was hard !
 'Tis mine, and this will witness outwardly,
 As strongly as the conscience does within,
 To the madding of her lord. *On her left breast,*
A mole, cinque-spotted, like the crimson drops
I' the bottom of a cowslip. Here's a voucher,
 Stronger than ever law could make : this secret
 Will force him think I have pick'd the lock, and ta'en
 The treasure of her honor. No more. To what end ?
 Why should I write this down that's riveted,
 Screw'd, to my memory ? She hath been reading late
 The tale of Tereus ; here the leaf's turn'd down
 Where Philomel gave up :—I have enough :—
 To the trunk again, and shut the spring of it.
 Swift, swift, you dragons of the night, that dawning
 May bare the raven's eye ! I lodge in fear ;
Though this a heavenly angel, hell is here.

[Clock strikes.]

One, two, three,—Time, time !

[Goes into the trunk. The scene closes.]

B E N J O N S O N ,

BORN, 1574,—DIED, 1637.



IF Ben Jonson had not tried to do half what he did, he would have had a greater fame. His will and ambition hurt him, as they always hurt genius when set in front of it. Lasting reputation of power is only to be obtained by power itself ; and this, in poetry, is the result not so much, if at all, of the love of the power, as of the power of love,—the love of truth and beauty,—great and potent things they,—not the love of self, which is generally a very little thing. The “supposed rugged old bard,” notwithstanding his huffing and arrogance, had elegance, feeling, imagination, great fancy ; but by straining to make them all greater than they were, bringing in the ancients to help him, and aiming to include the lowest farce (perhaps by way of outdoing the universality of Shakspeare), he became as gross in his pretensions, as drink had made him in person. His jealous irritability and assumption tired out the gentlest and most generous of his contemporaries—men who otherwise really liked him (and he them),—Decker for one ; and he has ended in appearing to posterity rather the usurper than the owner of a true renown. He made such a fuss with his learning, that he is now suspected to have had nothing else. Hazlitt himself cannot give him credit for comic genius, so grave and all-in-all does his pedantry appear to that critic,—an erroneous judgment, as it seems to me,—who cannot help thinking, that what altogether made Ben what he was projected his ultra-jovial person rather towards comedy than tragedy ; and as a proof of this, his tragedies are all borrowed, but his comedies his own. Twelfth Night and other plays of Shakspeare preceded and surpassed

him in his boasted "humor ;" but his Alchemist, and especially his Volpone, seem to me at the head of all severer English comedy. The latter is a masterpiece of plot and treatment. Ben's fancy, a power tending also rather to the comic than tragic, was in far greater measure than his imagination ; and their strongest united efforts, as in the Witches' Meeting, and the luxurious anticipations of Sir Epicure Mammon, produce a smiling as well as a serious admiration. The three happiest of all his short effusions (two of which are in this volume) are the epitaph on Lady Pembroke, the address to Cynthia (both of which are serious indeed, but not tragic), and the Catch of the Satyrs, which is unique for its wild and melodious mixture of the comic and the poetic. His huge farces, to be sure (such as Bartholomew Fair), are execrable. They seem to talk for talking's sake, like drunkards. And though his famous verses, beginning " Still to be neat, still to be drest," are elegantly worded, I never could admire them. There is a coarseness implied in their very refinement.

After all, perhaps it is idle to wish a writer had been otherwise than he was, especially if he is an original in his way, and worthy of admiration. His faults he may have been unable to mend, and they may not have been without their use, even to his merits. If Ben had not been Ben, Sir Epicure Mammon might not have talked in so high a tone. We should have missed, perhaps, something of the excess and altitude of his expectations—of his

Gums of Paradise and *eastern air*.

Let it not be omitted, that Milton went to the masques and odes of Ben Jonson for some of the elegances even of his dignified muse. See Warton's edition of his Minor Poems, *passim*. Our extracts shall commence with one of these odes, combining classic elegance with a tone of modern feeling, and a music like a serenade.

TO CYNTHIA;—THE MOON.

Queen of hunters, chaste and fair,
 Now the sun is laid asleep,
Seated in thy silver chair,
 State in wonted manner keep,
 Hesperus entreats thy light,
Goddess, excellently bright.

Earth, let not thy envious shade
 Dare itself to interpose ;
 Cynthia's shining orb was made
Heav'n to clear, when day did close.
 Bless us then with wished sight,
Goddess, excellently bright.

Lay thy bow of pearl apart,
 And thy crystal shining quiver ;
 Give unto the flying hart
Space to breathe, how short soever ;
Thou, that mak'st a day of night,
Goddess, excellently bright.

THE LOVE-MAKING OF LUXURY.

Volpone makes love to Celia.

Volp. See, behold,
 What thou art queen of ; not in expectation,
 As I feed others, but possess'd and crown'd.
 See here, a rope of pearl ; and each, more orient
 Than that the brave Ægyptian queen caroused :
 Dissolve and drink them. See, a carbuncle,
 May put out both the eyes of our St. Mark ;
 A diamond would have bought Lollia Pauliner,
When she came in like star-light, hid with jewels,
That were the spoils of provinces ; take these
 And wear and lose them ; yet remains an ear-ring

To purchase them again, and this whole state.
 A gem but worth a private patrimony,
 Is nothing : we will eat such at a meal.
 The heads of parrots, tongues of nightingales,
 The brains of peacocks, and of estriches,
 Shall be our food : *and, could we get the phœnix,*
Though nature lost her kind, she were our dish.

Cel. Good sir, these things might move a mind affected
 With such delights ; but I, whose innocence
 Is all I can think wealthy, or worth th' enjoying,
 And which, once lost, I have naught to lose beyond it,
 Cannot be taken with these sensual baits :
 If you have conscience—

Volp. 'Tis the beggar's virtue :
 If thou had wisdom, hear me, Celia.
 Thy baths shall be the juice of July flowers,
 Spirit of roses and of violets,
 The milk of unicorns, and panthers' breath
 Gather'd in bags, and mixt with Cretan wines.
 Our drink shall be preparèd gold and amber ;
 Which we will take until my roof whirl round
 With the vertigo : and my dwarf shall dance,
 My eunuch sing, my fool make up the antic ;
 Whilst we, in changed shape, act Ovid's tales ;
 Thou, like Europa now, and I like Jove ;
 Then I like Mars, and thou like Erycine :
 So, of the rest, till we have quite run through
 And wearied all the fables of the gods.

TOWERING SENSUALITY.

Sir Epicure Mammon, expecting to obtain the Philosopher's Stone,
riots in the anticipation of enjoyment.

Enter MAMMON and SURLY.

Mam. Come on, sir. Now, you set your foot on shore
 In *Novo Orbe* : here's the rich Peru :
 And there within, sir, are the golden wines,
 Great Solomon's Ophir ! *he was sailing to 't*
Three years ; but we have reach'd it in ten months.
 This is the day, wherein to all my friends,
 I will pronounce the happy word, BE RICH.
 Where is my Subtle there ! Within !

Enter Face.

How now?

Do we succeed? Is our day come? and holds it?

Face. The evening will set red upon you, sir; You have color for it, crimson: the red ferment Has done his office: three hours hence prepare you To see projection.

Mam. Pertinax, my Surly, Again I say to thee, aloud, BE RICH. This day thou shalt have ingots; *and to-morrow Give lords the affront.*—Is it, my Zephyrus, right?— Thou'rt sure thou saw'st it blood?

Face. Both blood and spirit, sir.

Mam. I will have all my beds blown up, not stuff'd:

Down is too hard.—My mists I'll have of perfume, vapor'd 'bout the room To lose ourselves in; and my baths, like pits, To fall into: from whence we will come forth, *And roll us dry in gossamer and roses,* Is it arriv'd at ruby?—And my flatterers Shall be the pure and *gravest of divines.*— And they shall fan me with ten estrich tails A-piece, made in a plume to gather wind. We will be brave, Puffe, now we have the med'cine *My meat shall all come in, in Indian shells,* Dishes of agate, set in gold, and studded With emeralds, sapphires, hyacinths, and rubies, The tongues of carps, dormice, and camels' heels, Boil'd in the spirit of sol, *and dissolv'd pearl,* Apicius' diet 'gainst the epilepsy: And I will eat these broths with spoons of amber, Headed with diamond and carbuncle. My foot-boy shall eat pheasants, calver'd salmons, Knots, godwits, lampreys: I myself will have The beards of barbels serv'd, instead of salads; Oil'd mushrooms; and the swelling, unctuous paps Of a fat pregnant sow, newly cut off, *Drest with an exquisite and poignant sauce,* For which I'll say unto my cook, “*There's gold;* *Go forth, and be a knight.*”

Face. Sir, I'll go look
A little, how it heightens.

[*Exit Face*]

Mam. Do. My shirts I'll have of taffeta-sarsnet, soft and light

As cobwebs; and for all my other raiment,
It shall be such as might provoke the Persian,
Were he to teach the world riot anew.
My gloves of fishes and birds' skins, perfum'd
With gums of Paradise and eastern air.

Sur. And do you think to have the stone with this?

Mam. No; I do think t' have all this with the stone!

Sur Why, I have heard he must be *homo frugi*,
A pious, holy, and religious man,
One free from mortal sin, a very virgin.

Mam. That makes it, Sir; he is so; **BUT I BUY IT.**

THE WITCH.

From the Pastoral Fragment, entitled "The Sad Shepherd."

Alken. Know ye the witch's dell?

Scathlock. No more than I do know the walks of hell.

Alken. Within a gloomy dimble she doth dwell,
Down in a pit, o'ergrown with brakes and briars.

Close by the ruins of a shaken abbey,
Torn with an earthquake down unto the ground,

'Mongst graves and grots, near an old charnel-house,
Where you shall find her sitting in her form,

As fearful and melancholic as that

She is about; with caterpillars' kells,
And knotty cobwebs, rounded in with spells.

Then she steals forth to relief in the fogs,
And rotten mists, upon the fens and bogs,

Down to the drownèd lands of Lincolnshire;

To make ewes cast their lambs, swine eat their farrow,
And housewives' tun not work, nor the milk churn!

Writhe children's wrists, and suck their breath in sleep,

Get vials of their blood! and where the sea

Casts up his slimy ooze, search for a weed

To open locks with, and to rivet charms,

Planted about her in the wicked feat

Of all her mischiefs; which are manifold.

John. I wonder such a story could be told
Of her dire deeds.

George. I thought a witch's banks
Had inclosed nothing but the merry pranks
Of some old woman.

Scarlet. Yes, her malice more.

Scath As it would quickly appear had we the store
Of his collects.

George. Ay, this good learned man
Can speak her right.

Scar. He knows her shifts and haunts—

Alken. And all her wiles and turns. The venom'd plants
Wherewith she kills ! where the sad mandrake grows,
Whose groans are deathful ; and dead-numbing night-shade,
The stupefying hemlock, adder's tongue,

And martagan : the shrieks of luckless owls

We hear, *and croaking night crows in the air !*

Green-bellied snakes, blue fire-drakes in the sky,
And giddy flitter-mice with leather wings !

The scaly beetles, with their habergeons,

That make a humming murmur as they fly !

There in the stocks of trees, *white fairies do dwell,*
And span-long elves that dance about a pool,

With each a little changeling in their arms !

The airy spirits play with falling stars,

And mount the spheres of fire to kiss the moon !

While she sits reading by the glow-worm's light,

Or rotten wood, o'er which the worm hath crept,

The baneful schedule of her nocent charms.

A MEETING OF WITCHES

FOR THE PURPOSE OF DOING A MISCHIEF TO A JOYFUL HOUSE, AND BRING-
ING AN EVIL SPIRIT INTO BIRTH IN THE MIDST OF IT.

From the Masque of Queens.

Charm. The owl is abroad, the bat and the toad,
And so is the cat-a-mountain ;
The ant and the mole both sit in a hole,
And the frog peeps out of the fountain
The dogs they do bay, and the timbrels play
The spindle is now a turning ;
The moon it is red, and the stars are fled,
But all the sky is a-burning.

1st Hag. I have been all day looking after
 A raven, feeding upon a quarter ;
 And soon as she turn'd her beak to the south,
 I snatch'd this morsel out of her mouth

2nd Hag. I have been gathering wolves' hairs,
 The mad dog's foam, and the adder's ears ;
 The spurging of a dead man's eyes,
 And all since the evening star did rise.

3rd Hag. I, last night, *lay all alone*
On the ground to hear the mandrake groan ;
 And pluck'd him up, though he grew full low,
 And as had done, the cock did crow.

4th Hag. And I have been choosing out this skull
 From charnel-houses that were full ;
 From private grots, and public pits ;
And frightened a sexton out of his wits.

5th Hag. Under a cradle I did creep,
 By day ; and when the child was asleep
 At night, I suck'd the breath ; and rose,
 And pluck'd the nodding nurse by the nose.

6th Hag. I had a dagger : what did I with that ?
Kill'd an infant to have his fat.
 I scratch'd out the eyes of the owl before,
 I tore the bat's wing ; what would you have more ?

Dame. Yes, I have brought to help our vows
 Hornèd poppy, cypress boughs,
 The fig-tree wild that grows on tombs,
 And juice that from the larch-tree comes,
 The basilisk's blood and the viper's skin ;
 And now our orgies let us begin.

You fiends and fairies, if yet any be
 Worse than ourselves, you that have quak'd to see
 These knots untied (*she unties them*)—exhale earth's rottenest
 vapors,
 And strike a blindness through these blazing tapers

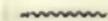
Charm. Deep, O deep we lay thee to sleep ,
 We leave thee drink by, if thou chance to be dry ;

Both milk and blood, the dew and the flood ;
We breathe in thy bed, at the foot and the head ;
 And when thou dost wake, *Dame Earth shall quake*
Such a birth to make, as is the Blue Drake.

Dame. Stay ; all our charms do nothing win
 Upon the night ; our labor dies,
 Our magic feature will not rise,
 Nor yet the storm ! We must repeat
 More direful voices far, *and beat*
The ground with vipers, till it sweat.

Charm. *Blacker go in, and blacker come out :*
 At thy going down, we give thee a shout ;
 Hoo !
 At thy rising again thou shalt have two ;
 And if thou dost what we 'd have thee do,
 Thou shalt have three, thou shalt have four,
 Hoo ! har ! har ! hoo !
 A cloud of pitch, a spur and a switch,
 To haste him away, and a whirlwind play,
 Before and after, *with thunder for laughter*
And storms of joy, of the roaring boy,
 His head of a drake, his tail of a snake.

(*A loud and beautiful music is heard, and the Witches vanish.*)



A CATCH OF SATYRS.

Silenus bids his Satyrs awaken a couple of Sylvans, who have fallen asleep while they should have kept watch.

Buz, quoth the blue fly,
Hum, quoth the bee ;
Büz and *hüm* they cry,
 And sò do we.
 In his eär, in his nòse,
 Thùs, do you see ?
Hè ate the dormouse ;
 Else it was *hè*.

"It is impossible that anything could better express than this, either the wild and practical joking of the satyrs, or the action of the thing described, or the quaintness and fitness of the images, or the melody and even the harmony, the *intercourse*, of the musical words, one with another. None but a boon companion with a very musical ear could have written it. It was not for nothing that Ben lived in the time of the fine old English composers, Bull and Ford, or partook his canary with his "lov'd Alphonso," as he calls him, the Signor Ferrabosco.—*A Jar of Honey from Mount Hybla*, in Ainsworth's Magazine, No. xxx., p. 86.

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER,

BEAUMONT, BORN 1586—DIED 1615.
FLETCHER, " 1576— " 1625.

POETRY of the highest order and of the loveliest character abounds in Beaumont and Fletcher, but so mixed up with inconsistent, and too often, alas! revolting matter, that, apart from passages which do not enter into the plan of this book, I had no alternative but either to confine the extracts to the small number which ensue, or to bring together a heap of the smallest quotations,—two or three lines at a time. I thought to have got a good deal more out of the *Faithful Shepherdess*, which I had not read for many years; but on renewing my acquaintance with it, I found that the same unaccountable fascination with the evil times which had spoilt these two fine poets in their other plays, had followed its author, beyond what I had supposed, even into the regions of Arcadia.

Mr. Hazlitt, who loved sometimes to relieve his mistrust by a fit of pastoral worship, pronounces the *Faithful Shepherdess* to be “a perpetual feast of nectar’d sweets, where no crude surfeit reigns.” I wish I could think so. There are both hot and cold dishes in it, which I would quit at any time to go and dine with the honest lovers of Allan Ramsay, whose *Gentle Shepherd*, though of another and far inferior class of poetry, I take upon the whole to be the completest pastoral drama that ever was written.

It is a pity that Beaumont and Fletcher had not been born earlier, and in the neighborhood of Shakspeare, and become his playmates. The wholesome company of the juvenile yeoman (like a greater Sandford) might have rectified the refined spirits

of the young gentlemen, and saved their Hippocrene from becoming ditch-water. Even as it is, they seem different men when writing in their own persons, and following the taste of the town. Compare, for example, Beaumont's exquisite verses on *Melancholy* (here printed) with any one of their plays; or Fletcher's lines entitled *An Honest Man's Fortune* with the play of the same name, to which it is appended. The difference is so great, and indeed is discernible to such an equal degree in the poetry which startles you in the plays themselves (as if two different souls were writing one passage), that it appears unaccountable, except on some principle anterior to their town life, and to education itself. Little is known of either of their families, except that there were numerous poets in both; but Fletcher's father was that Dean of Peterborough (afterwards Bishop of London) who behaved with such unfeeling impertinence to the Queen of Scots in her last moments, and who is said (as became such a man) to have died of chagrin, because Elizabeth was angry at his marrying a second time. Was poetry such a "drug" with "both their houses" that the friends lost their respect for it? or was Fletcher's mother some angel of a woman—some sequestered Miranda of the day—with whose spirit the "earth" of the Dean her husband but ill accorded?

Every devout lover of poetry must have experienced the wish of Coleridge, that Beaumont and Fletcher had written "poems instead of tragedies." Imagine as voluminous a set of the one as they have given us of the other! It would have been to sequestered real life what Spenser was to the land of Faery,—a retreat beyond all groves and gardens, a region of medicinal sweets of thought and feeling. Nor would plenty of fable have been wanting. What a loss! And this,—their birthright with posterity—these extraordinary men sold for the mess of the loathsome pottage of the praise and profligacy of the court of James I.

But let us blush to find fault with them, even for such a descent from their height, while listening to their diviner moods.

MELANCHOLY.

BY BEAUMONT.

Hence, all you vain delights,
As short as are the nights
Wherein you spend your folly;
There's naught in this life sweet,
Were men but wise to see 't,
But only Melancholy;
O sweetest Melancholy!

Welcome, folded arms and fix'd eyes;
A sigh, that piercing, mortifies;
A look that's fasten'd to the ground;
A tongue chain'd up without a sound.

Fountain heads and pathless groves,
*Places which pale passion loves;*¹
Moonlight walks, when all the fowls
Are warmly hous'd save bats and owls;
A midnight bell, a parting groan,
These are the sounds we *feed upon*:
Then stretch our bones in a still gloomy valley;
*Nothing so dainty sweet as lovely Melancholy.*²

² “*Lovely Melancholy.*”—Tradition has given these verses to Beaumont, though they appeared for the first time in a play of Fletcher's after the death of his friend. In all probability Beaumont had partly sketched the play, and left the verses to be inserted.

I cannot help thinking that a couplet has been lost after the words “bats and owls.” It is true the four verses ending with those words might be made to belong to the preceding four, as among the things “welcomed;” but the junction would be forced, and the modulation injured. They may remain, too, where they are, as combining to suggest the “sounds” which the melancholy man feeds upon; “fountain-heads” being audible, “groves” whispering, and the “moonlight walks” being attended by the hooting “owl.” They also modulate beautifully in

this case. Yet these intimations themselves appear a little forced; whereas, supposing a couplet to be supplied, there would be a distinct reference to melancholy *sights*, as well as sounds.

The conclusion is divine. Indeed the whole poem, as Hazlitt says, is "the perfection of this kind of writing." Orpheus might have hung it, like a pearl, in the ear of Proserpina. It has naturally been thought to have suggested the *Penseroso* to Milton, and is more than worthy to have done so; for fine as that is, it is still finer. It is the concentration of a hundred melancholies. Sir Walter Scott, in one of his biographical works, hardly with the accustomed gallantry and good-nature of the great novelist, contrasted it with the "melo-dramatic" abstractions of Mrs. Radclyffe (then living). He might surely, with more justice, have opposed it to the diffuseness and conventional phraseology of "novels in verse."

¹ "Places which pale passion loves."—Beaumont, while writing this verse, perhaps the finest in the poem, probably had in his memory that of Marlowe, in his description of Tamburlaine.

Pale of complexion, wrought in him with passion.



A SATYR PRESENTS A BASKET OF FRUIT TO THE FAITHFUL SHEPHERDESS.

BY FLETCHER.

Here be grapes whose *lusty blood*
Is the learned poet's good;
Sweeter yet did never crown
The head of Bacchus; nuts more brown
Than the squirrel's teeth that crack them;
Deign, oh, fairest fair! to take them.
For these black-eyed Dryope
Hath oftentimes commanded me
With my *claspèd knee* to climb:
See how well the lusty time
Hath deck'd their rising cheeks in red,
Such as on your lips is spread.

Here be berries for a queen,
Some be red—some be green;³
 These are of *that luscious meat*
The great god Pan himself doth eat ;
 All these, and what the woods can yield,
 The hanging mountain or the field,
 I freely offer; and ere long
 Will bring you more, more sweet and strong;
 Till when, humbly leave I take,
 Least the great Pan do awake
That sleeping lies in a deep glade,
Under a broad beech's shade.⁴
 I must go, I must run,
 Swifter than the fiery sun

³ “ *Some be red, some be green.*”—This verse calls to mind a beautiful one of Chaucer, in his description of a grove in spring :—

In which were oaks great, straight as a line,
 Under the which the grass, so fresh of hue,
 Was newly sprung, and an eight foot or nine,
 Ev-e-ry tree well from his fellow grew,
 With branches broad, laden with leavès new,
 That sprangen out against the sunny sheen,
Some very red, and some a glad light green.

The Flower and the Leaf.

Coleridge was fond of repeating it.

⁴ “ *That sleeping lies*,” &c.—Pan was not to be waked too soon with impunity.

Οὐ θερις, ω ποιμαν, το μεσαμβρινον, ον θερις αμμιν
 Τυρισδεν' τον Πανα δεδοικαμες' η γαρ απ' αυρα
 Ταυτα κεκμακως αμπανεσταλ' εντι δε πικρος
 Και δι αει δριμεια χολα ποτι βινι καθηται.

Theocritus, *Idyll i., v. 15.*

No, shepherd, no; we must not pipe at noon :
 We must fear Pan, who sleeps after the chase,
 Ready to start in snappish bitterness
 With quivering nostril.

What a true picture of the half-goat divinity !

A SPOT FOR LOVE TALES.

Here be all new delights, cool streams and wells ;
Arbors o'ergrown with woodbines ; caves and dells ;
Choose where thou wilt, whilst I sit by and sing,
Or gather rushes, to make many a ring
For thy long fingers ; tell thee tales of love ;
How the pale Phœbe, hunting in a grove,
First saw the boy Endymion, *from whose eyes*
She took eternal fire that never dies ;
How she conveyed him softly in a sleep,
His temples bound with poppy, to the steep
Head of old Latmus, where she stoops each night,
Gilding the mountain with her brother's light,
To kiss her sweetest.

~~~~~

## MORNING.

See, the day begins to break,  
And the light *shoots like a streak*  
*Of subtle fire.* The wind blows cold  
While the morning doth unfold.

I have departed from my plan for once, to introduce this very small extract, partly for the sake of its beauty, partly to show the student that great poets do not confine their pleasant descriptions to images or feelings pleasing in the commoner sense of the word, but include such as, while seeming to contradict, harmonize with them, upon principles of truth, and of a genial and strenuous sympathy. The “subtle streak of fire” is obviously beautiful, but the addition of the cold wind is a truth welcome to those only who have strength as well as delicacy of apprehension,—or rather, that healthy delicacy which arises from the strength. Sweet and wholesome, and to be welcomed, is the chill breath of morning. There is a fine epithet for this kind of dawn in the elder Marston’s *Antonio and Melida* :—

Is not yon gleam *the shuddering morn*, that flakes  
With silver tincture the east verge of heaven?

### THE POWER OF LOVE.

Hear, ye ladies that despise  
What the mighty Love has done ;  
*Fear examples and be wise :*  
    Fair Calisto was a nun ;  
Leda, sailing on the stream  
    To deceive the hopes of man,  
*Love accounting but a dream*  
    *Doted on a silver swan ;*  
Danaë, in a brazen tower,  
    *Where no love was, lov'd a shower.*<sup>5</sup>

\* Hear, ye ladies that are coy,  
    What the mighty Love can do,  
*Fear the fierceness of the boy :*  
    The chaste moon he makes to woo ;  
Vesta, kindling holy fires,  
    Circled round about with spies,  
Never dreaming loose desires,  
    Doting at the altar dies ;  
*Ilion in a short hour, higher*  
    *He can build, and once more fire.*

“ *Where no love was.*”—See how extremes meet, and passion writes as conceit does, in these repetitions of a word :—

Where no love was, lov'd a shower.

So, still more emphatically, in the instance afterwards :—

*Fear the fierceness of the boy—*

than which nothing can be finer. Wonder and earnestness conspire to stamp the iteration of the sound.

## INVOCATION TO SLEEP.

*Sung to Music : the EMPEROR VALENTINIAN sitting by, sick, in a chair.*

Care-charming Sleep, thou easer of all woes,—  
 Brother to Death, sweetly thyself dispose  
*On this afflicted prince* : fall-like a cloud  
 In gentle showers ; give nothing that is loud  
 Or painful to his slumbers ;—easy, sweet,<sup>6</sup>  
 And as a purling stream, thou son of night,  
 Pass by his troubled senses :—sing his pain,  
*Like hollow murmuring wind, or silver rain* :  
 Into this prince gently, oh, gently slide,  
*And kiss him into slumbers like a bride* !

<sup>6</sup> “ *Easy; sweet.*”—In rhymes like *night* and *sweet*, the fine ears of our ancestors discerned a harmony to which we have been unaccustomed. They perceived the double *e*, which is in the vowel *i*,—night *nah-eet*. There is an instance in a passage in the *Midsummer Night’s Dream*, extracted at page 126, where the word *bees*, as well as *mulberries*, and *dewberries*, is made to rhyme with *eyes*, *arise*, &c. Indeed, in such words as *mulberries* the practice is still retained, and *e* and *i* considered corresponding sounds in the fainter terminations of polysyllables :—*free, company—fly, company*.

Was ever the last line of this invocation surpassed ? But it is all in the finest tone of mingled softness and earnestness. The verses are probably Fletcher’s. He has repeated a passage of it in his poem entitled *An Honest Man’s Fortune*.

Oh, man ! thou image of thy Maker’s good,  
 What canst thou fear, when breath’d into thy blood  
 His Spirit is that built thee ? What dull sense  
 Makes thee suspect, in need, that Providence  
*Who made the morning*, and who plac’d the light  
 Guide to thy labors ; who call’d up the night,  
 And bid her fall upon thee *like sweet showers*  
*In hollow murmurs* to lock up thy powers !

*O si sic omnia !*

## MIDDLETON, DECKER, AND WEBSTER,

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WHEN about to speak of these and other extraordinary men of the days of Shakspeare, the Marstons, Rowleys, Massingers, Draytons, &c., including those noticed already, I wasted a good deal of time in trying to find out how it was that, possessing, as most of them did, such a pure vein of poetry, and sometimes saying as fine things as himself, they wrote so much that is not worth reading, sometimes not fit to be read. I might have considered that, either from self-love, or necessity, or both, too much writing is the fault of all ages and of every author. Even Homer, says Horace, sometimes nods. How many odes might not Horace himself have spared us! How many of his latter books, Virgil! What theology, Dante and Milton! What romances, Cervantes! What Comedies, Ariosto! What tragedies, Dryden! What heaps of words, Chaucer and Spenser! What *Iliads*, Pope!

Shakspeare's contemporaries, however, appear to have been a singularly careless race of men, compared with himself. Could they have been rendered so by that very superiority of birth and education which threw them upon the town, in the first instance, with greater confidence, his humbler prospects rendering him more cautious? Or did their excess of wit and fancy require a counter-perfection of judgment, such as he only possessed? Chapman and Drayton, though their pens were among the profusest and most unequal, seem to have been prudent men in conduct; so in all probability were Ford and Webster; but none of these had the animal spirits of the others. Shakspeare had animal spirits, wit, fancy, judgment, prudence in money matters, understanding like Bacon, feeling like Chaucer, mirth like Rabelais, dignity like Milton! What a man! Has anybody discovered the reason why he never noticed a living

contemporary, and but one who was dead ? and this too in an age of great men, and when they were in the habit of acknowledging the pretensions of one another. It could not have been jealousy, or formality, or inability to perceive merits which his own included ; and one can almost as little believe it possible to have been owing to a fear of disconcerting his aristocratic friends, for they too were among the eulogizers : neither can it be attributed to his having so mooted all points, as to end in caring for none ; for in so great and wise a nature, *good* nature must surely survive everything, both as a pleasure and a duty. I have made up my mind to think that his theatrical *management* was the cause. It naturally produced a dislike of pronouncing judgments and incurring responsibilities. And yet he was not always a manager ; nor were all his literary friends playwrights. I think it probable, from the style, that he wrote the sonnet in which Spenser is eulogized :—

If music and sweet poetry agree, &c.

but this is doubtful ; and Spenser was not one of his dramatic fellows. Did he see too many faults in them *all* to praise them !! Certainly the one great difference between him and them, next to superiority of genius, is the prevailing relevancy of all he wrote ; its freedom, however superabundant, from inconsistency and caprice. But could he find nothing to praise ? Nothing in the whole contemporary drama ? Nothing in all the effusions of his friends and brother clubbists of the Mermaid and the Triple Tun ?

I take Webster and Decker to have been the two greatest of the Shakspeare men, for unstudied genius, next after Beaumont and Fletcher ; and in some respects they surpassed them. Beaumont and Fletcher have no such terror as Webster, nor any such piece of hearty, good, affecting human clay, as Decker's "Old Signior Orlando Friscobaldo." Is there any such man even in Shakspeare ?—any such exaltation of that most delightful of all things, *bonhomie* ? Webster sometimes overdoes his terror ; nay often. He not only riots, he debauches in it ; and Decker, full of heart and delicacy as he is, and qualified to teach refinement to the refined, condescends to an

astounding coarseness. Beaumont and Fletcher's good company saved them from that, in words. In spirit they are full of it. But Decker never mixes up (at least not as far as I can remember) any such revolting and impossible contradictions in the same character as they do. Neither does he bring a doubt on his virtue by exaggerating them. He believes heartily in what he does believe, and you love him in consequence. It was he that wrote that character, the piety of which has been pronounced equal to its boldness :—

The best of men  
That e'er wore earth about him was a sufferer;  
A soft, meek, patient, humble, tranquil spirit;  
The first true gentleman that ever breath'd.

His universal sympathy enabled him to strike out that audacious and happy simile, “untameable as *flies*,” which Homer would have admired, though it is fit to make poetasters shudder. The poetaster, had Decker offered to make him a present of it, would have been afraid of being taken for a fly himself. Images are either grand in themselves, or for the thought and feeling that accompany them. This has all the greatness of Nature's “equal eye.” You may see how truly Decker felt it to be of this kind, by the company in which he has placed it; and there is a consummation of propriety in its wildness, for he is speaking of lunatics :—

There are of madmen, as there are of tame,  
All humor'd not alike. We have here some  
So apish and fantastic, will play with a feather;  
And though 'twould grieve a soul to see God's image  
So blemish'd and defaced, yet do they act  
Such antic and such pretty lunacies,  
That, spite of sorrow, they will make you smile.  
Others again we have *like hungry lions*,  
*Fierce as wild bulls*, untameable as flies.

Middleton partakes of the poetry and sweetness of Decker, but not to the same height; and he talks more at random. You hardly know what to make of the dialogue or stories of some of his plays. But he has more fancy; and there is one characte

of his (De Flores in the “*Changeling*”) which, for effect at once tragical, probable, and poetical, surpasses anything I know of in the drama of domestic life. Middleton has the honor of having furnished part of the witch poetry to Macbeth, and of being conjoined with it also in the powerful and beautiful music of Locke.

From Massinger, Ford, and the others (as far as I have met with them, and apart from the connexion of Massinger’s *name* with Decker), I could find nothing to extract of a nature to suit this particular volume, and of equal height with its contents. It is proper to state, however, that I have only glanced through their works: for though no easily daunted reader, I never read an entire play either of Ford or Massinger. They repel me with the conventional tendencies of their style, and their unnatural plots and characters. Ford, however, is elegant and thoughtful; and Massinger has passion, though (as far as I know) not in a generous shape. With these two writers began that prosaical part of the corruption of dramatic style (merging passionate language into conventional) which came to its head in Shirley.

*Donusa.* What magic hath transform’d me from myself?  
*Where is my virgin pride?* how have I lost  
*My boasted freedom!* what new fire burns up  
 My scorch’d entrails! ! what unknown desires  
*Invade,* and take possession of my soul?

Massinger’s *Renegado*.

*Hialas.* To this union  
 The good of both the Church and Commonwealth  
*Invite* you.

*Durham.* To this unity, a mystery  
 Of providence *points out* a greater blessing  
 For both these nations, than our human wisdom  
*Can search into.* King Henry hath a daughter,  
 The Princess Margaret. *I need not urge,* &c.

Ford’s *Perkin Warbeck*.

Both these passages are the first I came to, on dipping into their works. One might fancy one’s self reading Cato or the Grecian Daughter, instead of men who had breathed the air of the days of Shakspeare.

Massinger was joint author with Decker, of the play from which the scene of the lady and the angel is taken ; but nobody who knows the style of the two men can doubt for a moment to which it belongs. I have, therefore, without hesitation assigned it according to the opinion expressed by Mr. Lamb.

### FLIGHT OF WITCHES.

*Scene, a Field. Enter HECATE, STADLIN, HOPPO, and other Witches. FIRESTONE in the background.*

*Hec.* The moon's a gallant ; see how brisk she rides !

*Stad.* Here's a rich evening, Hecate.

*Hec.* Ay, is't not, wenches, To take a journey of five thousand miles ?

*Hop.* O 't will be precious ! Heard you the owl yet ?

*Stad.* Briefly in the copse, As we came through now.

*Hec.* 'T is high time for us then

*Stad.* *There was a bat hung at my lips three times,* As we came through the woods, and drank her fill : Old Puckle saw her.

*Hec.* You are fortunate still ; *The very screech-owl lights upon your shoulder,* And woos you like a pigeon. Are you furnished ? Have you your ointments ?

*Stad..* All.

*Hec.* Prepare to flight then ; I'll overtake you swiftly.

*Stad.* Hie thee, Hecate ; We shall be up betimes.

*Hec.* I'll reach you quickly.

[*Exeunt all the Witches except HECATE.*

*Fire.* They are all going a birding to-night : they talk of fowls i' th' air that fly by day ; I am sure they 'll be a company of foul sluts there to-night : if we have not mortality after 't, I 'll be hanged, for they are able to putrefy it, to infect a whole region. She spies me now.

*Hee.* What, Firestone, our sweet son ?

*Fire* A little sweeter than some of you, or a dunhill were too good for me. [Aside.

*Hec* How much hast here ?

*Fire.* Nineteen, and all brave plump ones, besides  
six lizards and three serpentine eggs.

*Hec.* Dear and sweet boy ! what herbs hast thou ?

*Fire.* I have some marmartin and mandragon.

*Hec.* Marmoritin and mandragora, thou wouldest say.

*Fire.* Here's panax too—I thank thee—my pan aches I'm sure, with  
kneeling down to cut 'em.

*Hec.* And selago,

Hedge-hysop too ; how near he goes my cuttings !

Were they all cropt by moonlight ?

*Fire.* Every blade of 'em,

Or I'm a moon-calf, mother.

*Hec.* Hie thee home with 'em :

Look well to the house to-night ; I'm for aloft.

*Fire.* Aloft, quoth you ? I would you would break your neck once, *that I might have all quickly !* [Aside.]—Hark, hark, mother ! they are above  
the steeple already, *flying over your head with a noise of musicians.*

*Hec.* They're they indeed. Help, help me ; I'm too late else.

### SONG ABOVE.

Come away, come away,  
Hecate, Hecate, come away.

*Hec.* I come, I come, I come, I come,  
With all the speed I may.  
Where's Stadlin ?

[*Voice above.*] Here.

*Hec.* Where's Puckle ?

[*Voice above.*] Here.  
And Hoppo too, and Hellwain too ;  
We lack but you, we lack but you ;  
Come away, make up the count.

*Hec.* I will but 'noint and then I mount.

[*A spirit like a cat descends*

[*Voice above.*] There's one comes down to fetch his dues,  
A kiss, a coll, a sip of blood ;  
And why thou stay'st so long, I muse,  
Since the air 's so sweet and good ?

*Hec.* O, art thou come ? what news, what news ?

*Spirit.* All goes still to our delight,  
Either come, or else refuse.

*Hec.* Now I'm furnished for the flight.

*Fire.* Hark, hark, the cat rings a brave treble in her own language !

[*Hec. going up.*] Now I go, now I fly,

*Malkin my sweet spirit and I.*

*O what a dainty pleasure 't is*

*To ride in the air  
When the moon shines fair,  
And sing and dance, and toy and kiss !  
Over woods, high rocks and mountains,  
Over seas, our mistress' fountains ;  
Over steeples, towers, and turrets,  
We fly by night, 'mongst troops of spirits :  
No ring of bells to our ears sounds ;  
No howls of wolves, no yelps of hounds ;  
No, not the noise of water's breach,  
Or cannon's throat our height can reach.*

[*Voice above.*] No ring of bells, &c.

*Fire.* Well, mother, I thank your kindness: you must be gambolling i' th' air, and leave me to walk here, like a fool and a mortal.

MIDDLETON.

### THE CHRISTIAN LADY AND THE ANGEL.

*An ANGEL, in the guise of a Page, attends on DOROTHEA.*

*Dor.* My book and taper

*Ang.* Here, most holy mistress.

*Dor.* Thy voice sends forth such music, that I never  
Was ravish'd with a more celestial sound.

Were every servant in the world like thee,  
So full of goodness, angels would come down  
To dwell with us: thy name is Angelo,  
And like that name thou art. Get thee to rest;  
Thy youth with too much watching is opprest.

*Ang.* No, my dear lady; I could weary stars,  
And force the wakeful moon to lose her eyes,  
By my late watching, but to wait on you.

*When at your prayers you kneel before the altar,*  
*Methinks I'm singing with some quire in heaven,*  
*So blest I hold me in your company:*  
Therefore, my most lov'd mistress, do not bid  
Your boy, so serviceable, to get hence;  
*For then you break his heart.*

*Dor.* Be nigh me still then.  
In golden letters down I'll set that day  
Which gave thee to me. Little did I hope  
To meet such worlds of comfort in thyself,

This little, pretty body, when I, coming  
 Forth of the temple, heard my beggar-boy,  
 My sweet-faced, godly beggar-boy, crave an alms,  
 Which with glad hand I gave, with lucky hand !  
 And when I took thee home, my most chaste bosom  
 Methought was fill'd with no hot wanton fire,  
 But with a holy flame, mounting since higher,  
 On wings of cherubims, than it did before.

*Ang. Proud am I, that my lady's modest eye  
 So likes so poor a servant.*

*Dor.* I have offer'd  
 Handfuls of gold but to behold thy parents.  
 I would leave kingdoms, were I queen of some  
 To dwell with thy good father; for, the son  
 Bewitching me so deeply with his presence,  
 He that got him must do it ten times more.  
 I pray thee, my sweet boy, show me thy parents;  
 Be not ashamed.

*Ang.* I am not: I did never  
 Know who my mother was; but by yon palace,  
 Fill'd with bright heavenly courts, I dare assure you,  
 And pawn these eyes upon it, and this hand,  
 My father is in heaven; and, pretty mistress,  
 If your illustrious hour-glass spend his sand,  
 No worse than yet it does, upon my life,  
 You and I both shall meet my father there,  
 And he shall bid you welcome!

*Dor.* O blessed day!  
 We all long to be there, but lose the way.

[*Exeunt.*

**DOROTHEA is executed; and the ANGEL visits THEOPHILUS, the Judge  
 that condemned her.**

*Theoph. (alone)* This Christian slut was well,  
 A pretty one; but let such horror follow  
 The next I feed with torments, that when Rome  
 Shall hear it, her foundation at the sound  
 May feel an earthquake. How now? (*Music.*)

*Ang.* Are you amazed, sir?  
 So great a Roman spirit, and doth it tremble?

*Theoph.* How cam'st thou in? to whom thy business?

*Ang.* To you.  
 I had a mistress, late sent hence by you  
*Upon a bloody errand;* you entreated,  
 That, when she came into that blessed garden

Whither she knew she went, and where, now happy,  
*She feeds upon all joy*, she would send to you  
 Some of that garden fruit and flowers; which here,  
 To have her promise sav'd, are brought by me.

*Theoph.* Cannot I see this garden?

*Ang.* Will give you entrance.

Yes, if the master

(*He vanishes.*)

*Theoph.* 'Tis a tempting fruit,  
 And the most bright-cheek'd child I ever view'd;  
 Sweet-smelling, goodly fruit. What flowers are these?  
 In Dioclesian's gardens, the most beauteous  
 Compar'd with these are weeds: is it not February,  
 The second day she died? frost, ice, and snow,  
 Hang on the beard of winter: where's the sun  
 That gilds this summer? pretty, sweet boy, say,  
 In what country shall a man find this garden?—  
 My delicate boy,—gone! vanish'd! within there,  
 Julianus! Geta!

*Both.* My lord.

*Theoph.* Are my gates shut?

*Geta.* And guarded.

*Theoph.* Saw you not  
 A boy?

*Jul.* Where?

*Theoph.* Here he enter'd, a young lad;  
 A thousand blessings *danc'd upon his eyes*;  
*A smooth-fac'd glorious thing, that brought this basket.*

*Geta.* No, sir.

*Theoph.* Away! but be in each, if my voice calls you.

DECKER.

### LADIES DANCING.

A fine sweet earthquake, gently mov'd  
 By the soft wind of whispering silks.

THE SAME.

## APRIL AND WOMEN'S TEARS.

Trust not a woman when she cries,  
For she'll pump water from her eyes  
With a wet finger, and in faster showers  
Than April *when he rains down flowers.*

THE SAME.

## DEATH.

There's a lean fellow beats all conquerors.

THE SAME.

## PATIENCE.

*Duke.* What comfort do you find in being so calm ?

*Candido.* That which green wounds receive from sovereign balm.

Patience, my lord ! why, 't is the *soul of peace* ;  
Of all the virtues 't is nearest kin to heaven ;  
It makes men look like gods. The best of men  
That e'er *wore earth about him* was a sufferer,  
A soft, meek, patient, humble, tranquil spirit,  
*The first true gentleman that ever breath'd.*  
The stock of patience then cannot be poor ;  
All it desires, it has ; what award more ?  
It is the greatest enemy to law  
That can be, for it doth embrace all wrongs,  
And so chains up lawyer's and women's tongues :  
*'T is the perpetual prisoner's liberty,*  
*His walks and orchards :* 't is the bond-slave's freedom,  
And makes him seem proud of his iron chain,  
As though he wore it more for state than pain :  
It is the beggar's music, and thus sings,—

Although their bodies beg, their souls are kings.  
O, my dread liege ! it is the sap of bliss,  
Bears us aloft, *makes men and angels kiss* ;  
And last of all, to end a household strife,  
*It is the honey 'gainst a waspish wife.*

THE SAME.

I had a doubt whether to put this exquisite passage into the present volume, or to reserve it for one of Contemplative poetry ; but the imagination, which few will not think predominant in it, together with a great admiration of the sentiments, of the thoughtful, good-natured alternation of jest and earnest, and of the sweetness of the versification, increased by a certain wild mixture of rhyme and blank verse, determined me to indulge the impulse. Perhaps Decker, who had experienced the worst troubles of poverty, not excepting loss of liberty, drew his patient man from himself, half-jesting over the portrait, in order to reconcile his praises of the virtue in the abstract, with a modest sense of it in his own person. To the strain in it of a "higher mood," I cannot but append what Mr. Hazlitt has said in his Lectures on the Literature of the Age of Elizabeth (Templeman's edition, p. 21). "There have been persons who, being sceptics as to the divine mission of Christ, have taken an unaccountable prejudice to his doctrines, and have been disposed to deny the merit of his character ; but this was not the feeling of the great men in the age of Elizabeth (whatever might be their belief), one of whom says of him, with a boldness equal to its piety, 'The best of men,' " &c. (Here the lecturer quotes the verses alluded to and adds), "This was honest old Decker ; and the lines ought to embalm his memory to every one who has a sense either of religion, or philosophy, or humanity, or true genius."

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#### A WICKED DREAM.

*Vittoria Corombona.* To pass away the time I'll tell your grace  
A dream I had last night.

*Brachiano.*                    Most wishedly.

*Vit. Cor.* A foolish idle dream,

Methought I walk'd, about the mid of night,  
Into a church-yard, where a goodly yew-tree  
Spread her large root in ground. Under that yew,  
*As I sat sadly leaning on a grave*  
Checquer'd with cross sticks, there came stealing in  
Your duchess and my husband ; one of them  
A pick-axe bore, th' other a rusty spade,  
And in rough terms they 'gan to challenge me  
About this yew.

*Brach.*                    That tree ?

*Vit. Cor.*                    This harmless yew.

They told me my intent was to root up  
That well-known yew, and plant i' th' stead of it  
A wither'd black-thorn : and for that they vow'd  
To bury me alive. My husband straight  
With pick-axe 'gan to dig ; and your fell duchess  
*With shovel, like a fury, voided out*  
*The earth, and scattered bones : Lord, how, methought,*  
I trembled, and yet for all this terror  
I could not pray.

*Flamineo.* (aside.) No ; the devil was in your dream.

*Vit. Cor.* When to my rescue there arose, methought  
A whirlwind, which let fall a massy arm,

*From that strong plant ;*  
*And both were struck dead by that sacred yew,*  
*In that base shallow grave which was their due.*

*Flamineo.* (aside.) Excellent devil ' she hath taught him in a dream  
To make away his duchess and her husband

WEBSTER.

## NATURAL DEATH.

O, thou soft natural death, that art joint twin  
To sweetest slumber ! no rough-bearded comet  
*Stares on thy mild departure ;* the dull owl  
Beats not against thy casement ; the hoarse wolf  
Scents not thy carrion : *pity winds thy corse,*  
Whilst horror waits on princes.

THE SAME

## FUNERAL DIRGE.

(Sung by a Mother over her Son.)

Call for the robin red-breast and the wren,  
*Since o'er shady groves they hover,*  
 And with leaves of flowers do cover  
*The friendless bodies of unburied men.*  
*Call unto his funeral dole*  
*The ant, the field mouse, and the mole,*  
 To raise him hillocks *that shall keep him warm;*  
 And when gay tombs are robb'd, sustain no harm :  
 But keep the wolf far thence, that's foe to men,  
 For with his nails he'll dig them up again.

THE SAME.

"I never saw," says Lamb, "anything like this dirge, except the ditty which reminds Ferdinand of his drowned father in the Tempest. That is of the water, watery ; so this is of the earth, earthy. Both have that intenseness of feeling which seems to resolve itself into the elements which it contemplates."—*Dramatic Specimens*, Moxon's edition, vol. i., p. 251.



## DISSIMULATION.

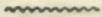
Be not cunning ;  
 For those whose faces do belie their hearts  
 Are witches ere they arrive at twenty years,  
 And give the devil suck.

THE SAME.

## BEAUTEOUS MORAL EXAMPLE.

Her I hold  
My honorable pattern ; one whose mind  
Appears more like a *ceremonious chapel*  
*Full of sweet music*, than a thronging presence.

THE SAME.



## UNLOVELINESS OF FROWNING.

Cupid sets a crown  
Upon those lovely tresses  
O, spoil not with a frown,  
What he so sweetly dresses !

THE SAME.

## M I L T O N ,

BORN, 1608,—DIED, 1674.

It is difficult to know what to do with some of the finest passages in Milton's great poem. To treat the objectionable points of their story as mythological, might be thought irreverent to opinion ; and to look upon them in the light in which he at first wished us to regard them (for he is understood to have changed his own opinions of it), involves so much irreverence towards the greatest of beings, that it is painful to seem to give them countenance. The difficulty is increased in a volume of the present kind, which is intended to give the reader no perplexity, except to know what to admire most. I have therefore thought it best to confine the extracts from Paradise Lost to unconnected passages ; and the entire ones to those poems which he wrote when a happy youth, undegenerated into superstition. The former will still include his noblest flights of imagination : the rest are ever fresh, true, and delightful.

Milton was a very great poet, second only (if second) to the very greatest, such as Dante and Shakspeare ; and, like all great poets, equal to them in particular instances. He had no pretensions to Shakspeare's universality ; his wit is dreary ; and (in general) he had not the faith in things that Homer and Dante had, apart from the intervention of words. He could not let them speak for themselves without helping them with his learning. In all he did, after a certain period of youth (not to speak it irreverently), something of the schoolmaster is visible ; and a gloomy religious creed removes him still farther from the universal gratitude and delight of mankind. He is understood, however, as I have just intimated, to have given this up before he died. He had then run the circle of his knowledge, and

probably come round to the wiser, more cheerful, and more poetical beliefs of his childhood.

In this respect, Allegro and Penseroso are the happiest of his productions ; and in none is the poetical habit of mind more abundantly visible. They ought to precede the *Lycidas* (not unhurt with theology) in the modern editions of his works, as they did in the collection of minor poems made by himself. *Paradise Lost* is a study for imagination and elaborate musical structure. Take almost any passage, and a lecture might be read from it on contrasts and pauses, and other parts of metrical harmony ; while almost every word has its higher poetical meaning and intensity ; but all is accompanied with a certain oppressiveness of ambitious and conscious power. In the Allegro and Penseroso, &c., he is in better spirits with all about him ; his eyes had not grown dim, nor his soul been forced inwards by disappointment into a proud self-esteem, which he narrowly escaped erecting into self-worship. He loves nature, not for the power he can get out of it, but for the pleasure it affords him ; he is at peace with town as well as country, with courts and cathedral-windows ; goes to the play and laughs ; to the village-green and dances ; and his study is placed, not in the Old Jewry, but in an airy tower, from whence he good-naturedly hopes that his candle—I beg pardon, his “ lamp,” for he was a scholar from the first, though not a Puritan—may be “ seen” by others. His mirth, it is true, is not excessively merry. It is, as Warton says, the “ dignity of mirth ;” but it is happy, and that is all that is to be desired. The mode is not to be dictated by the mode of others ; nor would it be so interesting if it were. The more a man is himself the better, provided he add a variation to the stock of comfort, and not of sullenness. Milton was born in a time of great changes ; and in the order of events and the working of good out of ill, we are bound to be grateful to what was of a mixed nature in himself, without arrogating for him that exemption from the mixture which belongs to no man. But upon the same principle on which nature herself loves joy better than grief, health than disease, and a general amount of welfare than the reverse (urging men towards it where it does not prevail, and making many a form of discontent itself but a mode of pleasure and

self-esteem), so Milton's great poem never has been, and never can be popular (sectarianism apart) compared with his minor ones ; nor does it, in the very highest sense of popularity, deserve to be. It does not work out the very piety it proposes ; and the piety which it does propose wants the highest piety of an intelligible charity and reliance. Hence a secret preference for his minor poems among many of the truest and selectest admirers of Paradise Lost,—perhaps with all who do not admire power in any shape above truth in the best ; hence Warton's fond edition of them, delightful for its luxurious heap of notes and parallel passages ; and hence the pleasure of being able to extract the finest of them, without misgiving, into a volume like the present.

### SATAN'S RECOVERY FROM HIS DOWNFALL.

He scarce had ceas'd, when the superior Fiend  
Was moving toward the shore, his ponderous shield  
Behind him cast; *the broad circumference*  
*Hung on his shoulders like the moon, whose orb*  
*Through optic glass the Tuscan artist views*  
*At evening from the top of Fesoli*  
*Or in Valdarno, to descry new lands,*  
*Rivers or mountains in her spotty globe.*  
His spear, to equal which the tallest pine  
Hewn on Norwegian hills, *to be the mast*  
*Of some great ammiral*, were but a wand,  
He walk'd with, to support uneasy steps  
Over the burning marle, not like those steps  
On Heaven's azure; and the torrid clime  
Smote on him sore besides, *vaulted* with fire:  
Nathless he so endur'd, till on the beach  
Of that inflamèd sea he stood, and call'd,  
His legions, angel forms, who lay entranc'd  
*Thick as autumnnal leaves that strow the brooks*  
*In Vallombrosa, where the Etrurian shades,*  
*High over-arch'd, embower*; or scatter'd sedge  
Afloat, when with fierce winds Orion arm'd  
Hath vex'd the Red Sea coast, whose waves o'erthrew  
*Busiris and his Memphian Chivalry*,  
While with perfidious hatred they pursued  
The sojourners of Goshen, who beheld  
From the safe shore their floating carcasses

And broken chariot wheels : so thick bestrown,  
 Abject and lost lay these, covering the flood,  
 Under amazement of their hideous change.  
*He call'd so loud, that all the hollow deep  
 Of Hell resounded.* Princes, Potentates,  
 Warriors, the flower of Heaven, once yours, now lost,  
 If such astonishment as this can seize  
 Eternal Spirits ; or have ye chosen this place  
 After the toil of battle to repose  
 Your *wearied virtue*, for the ease you find  
 To slumber here, as in the vales of Heaven ?  
 Or in this abject posture have ye sworn  
 To adore the conqueror ? who now beholds  
 Cherub and Seraph rolling in the flood,  
 With scatter'd arms and ensigns ; till anon  
 His swift pursuers from heaven-gates discern  
 The advantage, and, descending, tread us down,  
 Thus drooping, or with link'd thunderbolts  
 Transfix us to the bottom of this gulf.  
*Awake, arise, or be for ever fallen !*

~~~~~

THE FALLEN ANGELS GATHERED AGAIN TO WAR.

All these and more came flocking ; but with looks
 Downcast and damp ; yet such wherein appear'd
 Obscure, some glimpse of joy, to have found their chief
 Not in despair ; which on his countenance cast
 Like doubtful hue ; but he, his wonted pride
 Soon recollecting, with high words, that bore
 Semblance of worth, not substance, gently rais'd
 Their fainting courage, and dispell'd their fears.
 Then straight commands, that at the warlike sound
 Of trumpets loud and clarions be uprear'd
 His mighty standard : that proud honor claim'd
 Azazel as his right, a cherub tall ;
 Who forthwith from the glittering staff unfurl'd
 The imperial ensign ; which, full high advanc'd,
Shone like a meteor streaming to the wind,
 With gems and golden lustre rich emblaz'd,
 Seraphic arms and trophies ; *all the while*
Sonorous metal blowing martial sounds :
 At which the universal host up-sent

*A shout, that tore Hell's concave, and beyond
Frighted the reign of Chaos and old Night.
All in a moment through the gloom were seen
Ten thousand banners rise into the air
With orient colors waving : with them rose
A forest huge of spears ; and thronging helms
Appear'd, and serried shields, in thick array
Of depth immeasurable : anon they move
In perfect phalanx to the Dorian mood
Of flutes and soft recorders ; such as rais'd
To height of noblest temper heroes old
Arming to battle ; and instead of rage
Deliberate valor breath'd, firm and unmov'd
With dread of death to flight or foul retreat,
Nor wanting power to mitigate and swage
With solemn touches troubled thoughts, and chase
Anguish, and doubt, and fear, and sorrow, and pain,
From mortal or immortal minds. Thus they
Breathing united force, with fix'd thought,
Mov'd on in silence to soft pipes, that charm'd
Their painful steps o'er the burnt soil : and now
Advanc'd in view they stand, a horrid front
Of dreadful length and dazzling arms, in guise
Of warriors old with order'd spear and shield ;
Awaiting what command their mighty chief
Had to impose : he through the arm'd files
Darts his experienc'd eye, and soon traverse
The whole battalion views ; their order due ;
Their visages and stature as of gods ;
Their number last he sums. And now his heart
Distends with pride, and hardening in his strength
Glories : for never, since created man,
Met such embodied force, as nam'd with these
Could merit more than that small infantry
Warr'd on by cranes ; though all the giant brood
Of Phlegra with the heroic race were join'd
That fought at Thebes and Ilium, on each side
Mix'd with auxiliar gods ; and what resounds
In fable or romance of Uther's son
Begirt with British and Armoric knights ;
And all who since, baptiz'd or infidel,
Jousted in Aspramont, or Montalban,
Damasco, or Marocco, or Trebisond,
Or whom Biserta sent from Afric shore,
When Charlemain with all his peerage fell
By Fontarabia. Thus far these beyond*

Compare of mortal prowess, yet observ'd
 Their dread commander : he, above the rest
 In shape and gesture proudly eminent,
Stood like a tower : his form had yet not lost,
All her original brightness ; nor appear'd
Less than arch-angel ruin'd, and the excess
Of glory obscur'd : as when the sun, new risen,
Looks through the horizontal misty air
Shorn of his beams ; or from behind the moon,
In dim eclipse, disastrous twilight sheds
On half the nations, and with fear of change
Perplexes monarchs. Darken'd so, yet shone
 Above them all the arch-angel : but his face
Deep scars of thunder had intrench'd ; and care
Sat on his faded cheek ; but under brows
 Of dauntless courage, and considerate pride,
Waiting revenge.

VULCAN.

Nor was his name unheard, or unador'd
 'In ancient Greece ;—and in Ausonian land
Men call'd him Mulciber ; and how he fell
 From heaven, they fabled, thrown by angry Jove
Sheer o'er the crystal battlements. From morn
To noon he fell ;—from noon to dewy eve,
A summer's day ; and with the setting sun
Dropt from the zenith like a falling star.

THE FALLEN ANGELS HEARD RISING FROM COUNCIL

Their rising all at once was as the sound
Of thunder heard remote.

SATAN ON THE WING FOR EARTH.

Meanwhile the adversary of God and man,
Satan, with thoughts inflam'd of highest design,
Puts on swift wings, and towards the gates of hell
Explores his solitary flight: sometimes
He scours the right-hand coast, sometimes the left;
Now shaves with level wing the deep; then soars
Up to the fiery concave towering high.
As when far off at sea a fleet descried
Hangs in the clouds, by equinoctial winds
Close sailing from Bengala, or the isles
Of Ternate and Tidore, whence merchants bring
Their spicy drugs; they, on the trading flood,
Through the wide Ethiopian to the Cape,
Ply stemming nightly towards the pole: So seemed
Far off the flying Fiend.

THE MEETING OF SATAN AND DEATH.

The other shape
If shape it might be call'd that shape had none
Distinguishable in member, joint, or limb;
Or substance might be call'd that shadow seem'd,
For each seem'd either: black it stood as Night,
Fierce as ten Furies, terrible as Hell,
And shook a dreadful dart; what seem'd his head
The likeness of a kingly crown had on.
Satan was now at hand, and from his seat
The monster moving onward came as fast
With horrid strides; Hell trembled as he strode.
The undaunted Fiend what this might be admir'd,
Admir'd, not fear'd; God and his Son except,
Created thing naught valued he, nor shunn'd;
And with disdainful look thus first began:
“ Whence and what art thou, execrable shape!
That dar'st, though grim and terrible, advance
Thy miscreated front athwart my way

To yonder gates ? through them I mean to pass,
That be assur'd, with leave unask'd of thee :
Retire, or taste thy folly ; and learn by proof,
Hell-born ! not to contend with Spirits of Heaven."

To whom *the Goblin*, full of wrath, replied :—
“ Art thou that Traitor-angel ; art thou he
Who first broke peace in heaven, and faith, till then
Unbroken ; and in proud rebellious arms
Drew after him the third part of Heaven's sons
Conjur'd against the Highest ; for which both thou
And they, outcast from God, are here condemn'd
To waste eternal days in wo and pain ?
And reckon'st thou thyself with Spirits of Heaven,
Hell-doom'd ! and breath'st defiance here and scorn,
Where I reign king, and to enrage thee more,
Thy king and lord ? Back to thy punishment,
False fugitive ! and to thy speed add wings,
Lest with a whip of scorpions I pursue
Thy lingering, or with one stroke of this dart,
Strange horror seize thee, and pangs unfelt before.”

So spake *the grizly Terror*, and in shape,
So speaking and so threatening, grew ten-fold
More dreadful and deform. On the other side
Incens'd with indignation, Satan stood
Unterrified ; *and like a comet burn'd,*
That fires the length of Ophiuchus huge
In the arctic sky, and from his horrid hair
Shakes pestilence and war. Each at the head
Levelled his deadly aim ; their fatal hands
No second stroke intend ; and such a frown
Each cast at the other, *as when two black clouds*
With Heaven's artillery fraught, come rattling on
Over the Caspian, then stand front to front,
Hov'ring a space, till winds the signal blow
To join their dark encounter in mid air :
So frown'd the mighty combatants, that hell
Grew darker at their frown ; so match'd they stood ;
For never but once more was either like
To meet so great a foe : and now great deeds
Had been achiev'd, whereof all hell had rung,
Had not the snaky Sorceress that sat
Fast by hell-gate, and kept the fatal key,
Risen, and with hideous outcry rush'd between.

L'ALLEGRO.

Hence, loathed Melancholy,
Of Cerberus and blackest midnight born
In Stygian cave forlorn,
'Mongst horrid shapes, and shrieks, and sights unholy
Find out some uncouth cell,
Where brooding Darkness spreads her jealous wings,
And the night-raven sings;
There under *ebon shades*, and low-brow'd rocks
As ragged as thy locks,
In dark Cimmerian desert ever dwell.

But come, thou goddess fair and free,
In heaven yclept Euphrosyne,
And by men, heart-easing Mirth;
Whom lovely Venus, at a birth
With two sister Graces more,
To ivy-crownèd Bacchus bore:
Or whether, as some sager sing,¹
The frolic wind, that breathes the spring,
Zephyr with Aurora playing,
As he met her once a Maying,
There on beds of violets blue
And fresh-blown roses wash'd in dew,
Fill'd her with thee, a daughter fair,
So buxom, blithe and debonair.
Haste thee, Nymph, and bring with thee
Jest and youthful Jollity,
Quips and Cranks, and wanton Wiles,²
Nods and Becks and *wreathèd Smiles*
Such as hang on Hebe's cheek,
And love to live in dimple sleek;
Sport that wrinkled Care derides,
And Laughter holding both his sides.
Come and trip it, as you go,
On the light fantastic toe;
And in thy right hand lead with thee
The mountain-nymph, sweet Liberty;
And, if I give thee honor due,
Mirth, admit me of thy crew,

To live with her, and live with thee,
In unreprovèd pleasures free ;
To hear the lark begin his flight,
And singing, startle the dull night,
From his watch-tower in the skies,
Till the dappled dawn doth rise ;
Then to come *in spite of sorrow,*
And at my window bid good morrow,
Through the sweet-briar, or the vine,
Or the twisted eglantine ;
While the cock with lively din,
Scatters the rear of *darkness thin*,
And to the stack or the barn-door
Stoutly struts his dames before :
Oft listening how the hounds and horn
Cheerly rouse the slumbering morn,
From the side of some hoar hill,
Through the high wood echoing shrill :
Sometimes walking, *not unseen*,
By hedge-row elms, on hillocks green,
Right against the eastern gate,
Where the great Sun begins his state,
Robed in flames and amber light,
The clouds in thousand liveries dight ;
While the ploughman near at hand,
Whistles o'er the furrowed land,
And the milkmaid singeth blithe,
And the mower whets his scythe,
And every shepherd tells his tale,⁴
Under the hawthorn in the dale.
Straight mine eye hath caught new pleasures,
Whilst the landskip round it measures ;
Russet lawns, and fallows gray,
Where the nibbling flocks do stray ;
Mountains, on whose barren breast
The laboring clouds do often rest ;
Meadows trim with daisies pied,
Shallow brooks and rivers wide.
Towers and battlements it sees
Bosom'd high in tufted trees,
Where perhaps *some beauty lies*,
The cynosure of neighboring eyes.⁵
Hard by, a cottage chimney smokes,
From betwixt two aged oaks :
Where Corydon and Thyrsis, met,
Are at their savory dinner set

Of herbs, and other country messes,
Which the neat-handed Phillis dresses ;
And then in haste her bower she leaves
With Thestylis to bind the sheaves ;
Or, if the earlier season lead,
To the tann'd haycock in the mead.
Sometimes, with secure delight,
The upland hamlets will invite,
When the merry bells ring round,
And the jocund rebecks sound
To māny a youth and māny a maid,
Dancing in the chequer'd shade ;
And young and old come forth to play
On a sunshine holy-day,
Till the live-long day-light fail.
Then to the spicy nut-brown ale,
With stories told of many afeat,
How faery Mab the junkets eat :
She was pinch'd, and pull'd, she said,
And he, by friars' lantern led ;
Tells how the drudging Goblin sweat,
To earn his cream-bowl duly set,
When in one night, ere glimpse of morn,
His shadowy flail had thrash'd the corn,
That ten-day laborers could not end ;
Then lies him down the lubber fiend,
And stretch'd out all the chimney's length
Basks at the fire his hairy strength ;
And crop-full out of doors he flings,
Ere the first cock his matin rings.
Thus done the tales, *to bed they creep,*
By whispering winds soon lul'd to sleep.
Tower'd cities please us then,
And the busy hum of men,
Where throngs of knights and barons bold,
In weeds of peace, high triumphs hold,
With store of ladies, whose bright eyes
Rain influence,⁶ and judge the prize
Of wit, or arms, while both contend
To win her grace, whom all commend.
There let Hymen oft appear
In saffron robe, with taper clear ;
And pomp, and feast, and revelry,
With masque and antique pageantry ;
Such sights as youthful poets dream
On summer eves by haunted stream.

Ther to the well-trod stage anon,
 If Jonson's learned sock be on,⁷
 Or sweetest Shakspeare, Fancy's child,
Warble his native wood-notes wild
 And ever against eating cares,
Lap me in soft Lydian airs,
 Married to immortal verse,
Such as the meeting soul may pierce,
In notes with many a winding bout
Of linkèd sweetness long drawn out,
With wanton heed and giddy cunning,
The melting voice through mazes running,
Untwisting all the chains that tie
The hidden soul of harmony;
 That Orpheus' self may heave his head
From golden slumbers on a bed
Of heap'd Elysian flowers and hear
 Such strains as would have won the ear
Of Pluto, to have quite set free
His half regain'd Eurydice.
 These delights if thou canst give,
 Mirth, with thee I mean to live.

Milton shows his early fondness for the Italian language, by taking from it the titles of these poems. *L'Allegro* is the mirthful (man), and *Il Penseroso* the melancholy (pensive rather, or thoughtful). These two poems are supposed, with good reason, to have been written at Horton in Buckinghamshire, where his parents were residing at the time of their composition. I mention this circumstance, first because it is pleasant to know when poetry is written in poetical places, and next for the sake of such readers as may happen to know the spot.

¹ “*Some sager sing.*”—Ben Jonson, in one of his Masks. “Because,” says Warburton, “those who give to Mirth such gross companions as Eating and Drinking, are the less sage mythologists.”

² “*Quips, and Cranks, and wanton Wiles.*”—What a *Crank* is, the commentators are puzzled to say. They guess, from analogy with “winding turns” (which the word originally appears to signify), that the poet means *cross purposes*, or some other such pastime. The witty author of *Hints to a young Reviewer* (afterwards, I believe, no mean reviewer himself), who criticised these

poems upon the pleasant assumption of their having “just come out,” and expressed his astonishment at “Mr. Milton’s amatory notions” (I quote from memory), takes occasion, from the obscurity of this word, to observe, that the “phenomenon of a tripping crank” would be very curious, and “doubtless attract numerous spectators.” He also, in reference to passages a little further on, wonders how “Mirth can be requested to *come* and *go* at the same instant ;” and protests at the confident immortality of the “young gentleman who takes himself for a poet,” in proposing to live with Mirth and Liberty both together.

To live with her, and live with thee,
In unreproved pleasures free.

How delightful is wit, when bantering in *behalf* of excellence !

³ “*Through the sweet-briar,*” &c.—“Sweet-briar and eglantine,” says Warton, “are the same plant: by the *twisted* eglantine he therefore means the honey-suckle: all three are plants often growing against the side or walls of a house.” This is true; yet the deduction is hardly certain. The same name sometimes means different flowers, in different counties; as may be seen from passages in Shakspeare. *Eglantine*, however, is the French word for the flower of the sweet-briar (*eglantier*); and hence it came to mean, in English, the briar itself. Perhaps, if Milton had been asked why he used it in this place, he would have made Johnson’s noble answer to the lady, when she inquired why he defined *pastern*, in his Dictionary, to be a horse’s *knee*;—“Ignorance, madam, ignorance.” Poets are often fonder of flowers than learned in their names; and Milton, like his illustrious brethren, Chaucer and Spenser, was born within the sound of Bow bell.

⁴ “*And every shepherd tells his tale.*”—It used to be thought, till Mr. Headley informed Warton otherwise, *telling his tale* meant telling a *love-tale*, or *story*. The correction of this fancy is now admitted; namely, that *tale* is a technical word for *numbering* sheep, and is so used by several poets,—Dryden for one. Warton, like a proper Arcadian, was loth to give up the fancy; but he afterwards found the new interpretation to be much the better

one. *Every* shepherd telling his *story* or *love-tale*, under a *hawthorn*, at one and the same instant, all over a district, would resemble indeed those pastoral groups upon bed-curtains, in which, and in no other place, such marvels are to be met with. Yet, in common perhaps with most young readers, I remember the time when I believed it, and was as sorry as Warton to be undeceived.

⁵ “*The Cynosure of neighboring eye.*”—*Cynosure* (dog’s-tail) for *load-star*, must have been a term a little hazardous, as well as over-learned, when it first appeared; though Milton, thinking of the nymph who was changed into the star so called (since known as *Ursa minor*), was probably of opinion, that it gave his image a peculiar fitness and beauty. That enjoying and truly poetical commentator, Thomas Warton, quotes a passage from Browne’s *Britannia’s Pastorals*, that may have been in Milton’s recollection:—

Yond palace, whose pale turret tops
Over the stately wood survey the copse;

and then he indulges in pleasing memories of the old style of building, and in regrets for the new, which was less picturesque and less given to concealment. “This was the great mansion-house,” says he, “in Milton’s early days. With respect to their rural residences, there was a coyness in our Gothic ancestors. Modern seats are seldom so deeply ambushed.” Warton would have been pleased at the present revival of the old taste, which indeed is far superior to the bald and barrack-like insipidities of his day; though as to the leafy accessories, I am afraid the poetic pleasure of living “embosom’d” in trees is not thought the most conducive to health.

⁶ “*Rain influence.*”—Da begli occhi un piacer si caldo piove.
Such fervent pleasure rains from her sweet eyes.

Petrarch, Son. cxxxii

⁷ “*Jonson’s learned sock.*”—“Milton has more frequently and openly copied the plays of Beaumont and Fletcher than of Shakspeare. One is therefore surprised, that in his panegyric on the stage he did not mention the twin-bards, when he cele-

brated the learned sock of Jonson, and the wood-notes wild of Shakspeare. But he concealed his love.”—WARTON.

Perhaps he was afraid of avowing it, on account of the licence of their muse.

IL PENSERO SO.

Hence, vain deluding Joys,
The brood of Folly *without Father* bred !
How little you bested,
Or fill the fixèd mind with all your toys !
Dwell in some idle brain,
And fancies fond with gaudy shapes possess,
As thick and numberless
As the gay motes that *people* the sunbeams ;⁸
Or likeliest hovering dreams,
The fickle pensioners of Morpheus’ train.

But hail, thou Goddess, sage and holy,
Hail, divinest Melancholy !
Whose saintly visage is too bright
To hit the sense of human sight,
And therefore, to our weaker view,
O'erlaid with black, staid wisdom's hue ;
Black, but such as in esteem
Prince Memnon’s sister might beseem,⁹
Or that starr'd Ethiop queen that strove
To set her beauty’s praise above
The sea-nymphs, and their powers offended :
Yet thou art higher far descended :
Thee bright-haired Vesta, long of yore,
To solitary Saturn bore :
His daughter she ; in Saturn’s reign
Such mixture was not held a stain :
Oft in glimmering bowers and glades
He met her, and in secret shades
Of woody Ida’s inmost grove,
Whilst yet there was no fear of Jove.
Come, pensive nun, devout and pure,
Sober, stedfast, and demure,
All in a robe of darkest grain,
Flowing with majestic train,

And sable stole of Cypress lawn
Over thy decent shoulders drawn.
Come, but keep thy wonted state,
With even step and musing gait,
And looks comm'rcing with the skies,
Thy rapt soul sitting in thine eyes;
There held in holy passion still,
Forget thyself to marble, till,
With a sad leaden downward cast,
Thou fix them on the earth as fast,—
And join with thee calm Peace and Quiet,
Spare Fast, *that oft with gods doth diet,*
And hears the Muses in a ring
Aye round about Jove's altar sing:
And add to these retired Leisure,
That in trim gardens takes his pleasure :
But first, and chiefest, with thee bring
Him that yon soars on golden wing,
Guiding the fiery-wheeled throne,
The cherub Contemplation ;¹⁰
And the mute Silence *hist along,*
Less Philomel will deign a song,
In her sweetest saddest plight,
Smoothing the rugged brow of night,
While Cynthia checks her dragon yoke
Gently o'er the accustom'd oak,
Sweet bird, that shunn'st the noise of folly,
*Most musical, most melancholy !*¹¹
Thee, chauntress, oft the woods among
I woo to hear thy even-song :
And missing thee, I walk *unseen*
On the dry smooth-shaven green,
To behold the wandering moon,
Riding near her highest noon,
*Like one that hath been led astray*¹²
Through the heaven's wide pathless way;
And oft, as if her head she bow'd,
Stooping through a fleecy cloud.
Oft, on a plot of rising ground.
I hear the far-off curfew sound,
Over some wide-water'd shore,
Swinging slow with sullen roar :
Or, if the air will not permit,
Some *still removed place* will fit,
*Where glowing embers through the room*¹³
Teach light to counterfeit a gloom ;

*Far from all resort of mirth,
Save the cricket on the hearth,
Or the bellman's drowsy charm,
To bless the doors from nightly harm.
Or let my lamp at midnight hour,
Be seen in some high lonely tower,¹⁴
Where I may oft out-watch the Bear
With thrice-great Hermes, or unsphere
The spirit of Plato, to unfold
*What worlds, or what vast regions, hold
The immortal mind, that hath forsook
Her mansion in this fleshly nook :*
And of those demons that are found
In fire, air, flood, or under ground,
Whose power hath a true consent
With planet or with element.
Sometime let gorgeous Tragedy
In sceptred pall come sweeping by,
Presenting Thebes or Pelops' line,
Or the tale of Troy divine ;
Or what (though rare) of later age
Ennobled hath the buskin'd stage.
But O, sad virgin, that thy power
Might raise Musæus from his bower ?
Or bid the soul of Orpheus sing
Such notes as, warbled to the string,
Drew iron tears down Pluto's cheek,
And made Hell grant what love did seek .
Or call up him that left half told ¹⁵
The story of Cambuscan bold,
Of Camball, and of Algarsife,
And who had Canace to wife,
That own'd the virtuous ring and glass ;
And of the wondrous horse of brass,
On which the Tartar king did ride :
And if aught else great bards beside
In sage and solemn tunes have sung,
Of turneys and of trophies hung,
Of forests and enchantments drear,
Where more is meant than meets the ear.
Thus Night, oft see me in thy pale career,
Till civil-suited morn appear ;
Not trick'd and frounc'd as she was wont
With the Attic boy to hunt,
But kercheft in a comely cloud,
*While rocking winds are piping loud,**

*Or usher'd with a shower still
When the gust hath blown his fill,
Ending on the rustling leaves
With minute-drops from off the eaves :
And when the sun begins to fling
His flaring beams, me, Goddess, bring
To arched walks of twilight groves,
And shadows brown, that Sylvan loves,
Of pine, or monumental oak,
Where the rude axe, with heaved stroke,
Was never heard the nymphs to daunt,
Or fright them from their hallowed haunt.
There in close covert by some brook,
Where no profaner eye may look,
Hide me from day's garish eye,
While the bee with honied thigh,
That at her flowery work doth sing,
And the waters murmuring,
With such consort as they keep,
Entice the dewy-feather'd Sleep ;
And let some strange mysterious dream
Wave at his wings in airy stream
Of lively portraiture display'd,
Softly on my eyelids laid ;
*And, as I wake, sweet music breathe
Above, about, or underneath,
Sent by some spirit to mortals good,
Or the unseen Genius of the wood.*
But let my due fest never fail
To walk the studious cloister's pale,
And love the high embow'd roof,
With antick pillars, massy proof,
*And storied windows richly dight,
Casting a dim religious light :
There let the pealing organ blow
To the full-voic'd quire below ;
In service high and anthems clear,
As may with sweetness, through mine ear,
Dissolve me into ecstacies,
And bring all heaven before mine eyes*
And may at last my weary age
Find out the peaceful hermitage,
The hairy gown and mossy cell,
Where I may sit and rightly spell
Of every star that heaven doth shew,
And every herb that sips the dew ;*

Till old experience do attain
To something like prophetic strain.
These pleasures, Melancholy, give,
And I with thee will choose to live.

He puts the *Penseroso* last, as a climax ; because he prefers the pensive mood to the mirthful. I do not know why he spells the word in this manner. I have never seen it without the *i*,—*Pensieroso*. In Florio's Dictionary the *ie* varies into an *o*,—*Pensoroso*; whence apparently the abbreviated form,—*Pensoso*.

⁸ “*As thick as motes in the sunne beams.*”—Chaucer.—But see how by one word, *people*, a great poet improves what he borrows.

⁹ “*Prince Memnon's sister.*”—It does not appear, by the ancient authors, that Memnon had a sister ; but Milton wished him to have one ; so here she is. It has been idly objected to Spenser, who dealt much in this kind of creation, that he had no right to add to persons and circumstances in old mythology. As if the same poetry which saw what it did might not see more !

¹⁰ “*The cherub Contemplation.*”—Learnedly called cherub, not seraph ; because the cherubs were the angels of knowledge, the seraphs of love. In the celestial hierarchy, by a noble sentiment, the seraphs rank higher than the cherubs.

¹¹ “*Most musical, most melancholy.*”—A question has been started of late years, whether the song of the nightingale is really melancholy ; whether it ought not rather to be called merry, as, in fact, Chaucer does call it. But *merry*, in Chaucer's time, did not mean solely what it does now ; but any kind of hasty or strenuous prevalence, as “*merry men*,” meaning men in their heartiest and manliest condition. He speaks even of the “*merry organ*,” meaning the church organ—the “*merry organ of the mass.*” Coleridge, in some beautiful lines, thought fit to take the merry side, out of a notion, real or supposed, of the necessity of vindicating nature from sadness. But the question is surely very simple,—one of pure association of ideas. The nightingale's song is not in itself melancholy, that is, no result of sadness on the part of the bird ; but coming, as it does, in the night-time, and making us reflect, and reminding us by its very beauty of the mystery and fleetingness of all sweet things, it

becomes melancholy in the finer sense of the word, by the combined overshadowing of the hour and of thought.

¹² “*Like one that hath been led astray.*”—This calls to mind a beautiful passage about the moon, in Spenser’s Epithalamium :—

Who is the same that at my window peeps ?
Or who is that fair face that shines so bright ?
Is it not Cynthia, she that never sleeps,
But walks about high heaven all the night ?

¹³ “*Where glowing embers.*”—Here, also, the reader is reminded of Spenser.—See p. 88 :—

A little glooming light much like a shade.

¹⁴ “*And may my lamp at midnight hour
Be seen.*”

The picturesque of the “be seen” has been much admired. Its good-nature seems to deserve no less approbation. The light is seen afar by the traveller, giving him a sense of home comfort, and, perhaps, helping to guide his way.

¹⁵ “*Call up him that left half told
The story of Cambuscan bold.*”

Chaucer, with his *Squire’s Tale*. But why did Milton turn Cambuscàn, that is, Cambus the Khan, into Cambùscan. The accent in Chaucer is never thrown on the middle syllable.

LYCIDAS.

The poet bewails the death of his young friend and fellow-student, Edward King, of Christ’s College, Cambridge, who was drowned at sea, on his way to visit his friends in Ireland. The vessel, which was in bad condition, went suddenly to the bottom, in calm weather, not far from the English coast ; and all on board perished. Milton was then in his twenty-ninth year, and his friend in his twenty-fifth. The poem, with good reason, is

supposed to have been written, like the preceding ones, at Horton, in Buckinghamshire.

Yet once more, O ye laurels, and once more,
Ye myrtles brown, with ivy never sere,
I come to pluck your berries harsh and crude,
And with forced fingers rude
Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year.
Bitter constraint, and sad occasion dear,
Compels me to disturb your season due :
For Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime,
Young Lycidas, and hath not left his peer.
Who would not sing for Lycidas ? he knew
Himself to sing, and build the lofty rhyme.
He must not float upon his watery bier
Unwept, and welter to the parching wind,
Without the meed of *some melodious tear*.¹⁶

Begin, then, sisters of the sacred well,
That from beneath the seat of Jove doth spring,
Begin, and somewhat loudly sweep the string,¹⁷
Hence with denial vain, and coy excuse,
So may some gentle Muse
With lucky words favor my destin'd urn,
And, as he passes, turn,
And bid fair peace to be my sable shroud :

For we were nurst upon the self-same hill,
Fed the same flock by fountain, shade, and rill :
Together both, e'er the high lawns appear'd
Under the opening eyelids of the Morn,
We drove a-field, and both together heard
What time the grey-fly winds her *sultry* horn.
Batt'ning our flocks with the fresh dews of night
Oft till the star, that rose, at evening, bright,
Tow'rds heav'n's descent had slop'd his west'ring wheel.
Meanwhile the rural ditties were not mute,
Temper'd to the oaten flute ;
Rough Satyrs danc'd ; and Fauns with cloven heel
From the glad sound would not be absent long
And old Damætas lov'd to hear our song.

But, O the heavy change, *now thou art gone*,
Now thou art gone, and never must return !
Thee, Shepherd, thee the woods and desert caves,
With wild thyme and the *gadding* vine o'ergrown,
And all their echoes mourn.
The willows, and the hazel copses green,
Shall now no more be seen

Fanning their joyous leaves to thy soft lays.
 As killing as the canker to the rose,
 Or taint worm to the weanling herds that graze,
 Or frost to flowers, that their gay wardrobe wear,
 When first the white thorn blows ;
 Such, Lycidas, thy loss to shepherd's ear,
 Where were ye, Nymphs, when the remorseless deep
Clos'd o'er the head of your lov'd Lycidas ? ¹⁸
 For neither were ye playing on the steep,
 Where your old bards, the famous Druids, lie,
 Nor on the shaggy top of Mona high,
 Nor yet where Deva spreads her *wizard* stream :¹⁹
 Ah, me ! I fondly dream,
 Had ye been there—for what could that have done ?
 What could the Muse herself that Orpheus bore,
 The Muse herself, for her enchanting son,
 Whom universal Nature did lament,
 When, by the rout that made the hideous roar,
 His *gory visage* down the stream was sent,
 Down the swift Hebrus to the Lesbian shore ?

Alas ! what boots it with incessant care
 To tend the homely, slighted, shepherd's trade,
 And strictly meditate the thankless Muse ?
 Were it not better done, as others use,
 To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,
Or with the tangles of Neæra's hair ?
 Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise
(That last infirmity of noble minds)
 To scorn delights, and live laborious days ;
 But the fair guerdon when we hope to find,
 And think to burst out into sudden blaze,
 Comes the blind Fury with th' abhorred shears,
 And slits the thin-spun life.—“ *But not the praise,*”
 Phœbus reply'd, *and touch'd my trembling ears* ;
 “ Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil,
 Nor in the glist'ring foil
 Set off to the world, nor in broad rumor lies,
 But lives, *and spreads aloft by those pure eyes*,
 And perfect witness of all-judging Jove ;
 As he pronounces lastly on each deed,
 Of so much fame in heaven expect thy meed.”

O fountain Arethuse, and thou honor'd-flood,
 Smooth-sliding Mincius, crown'd with vocal reeds,
 That strain I heard was of a higher mood :
 But now my oat proceeds,
 And listens to the herald of the sea

That came in Neptune's plea ;
He ask'd the waves, and ask'd the felon winds,
What hard mishap hath doom'd this gentle swain ?
And question'd *every gust of rugged wings*
That blows from off each beaked promontory.
They knew not of his story ;
And sage Hippotades their answer brings,
That not a blast was from his dungeon stray'd ;
The air was calm, *and on the level brine*
Sleek Panope with all her sisters play'd.
It was that fatal and perfidious bark,
Built in the eclipse, and rigg'd with curses dark,
That sunk so low that sacred head of thine.

Next Camus, reverend sire, went footing slow,
His mantle hairy, and his bonnet sedge,
Inwrought with figures dim, and on the edge
Like to that sanguine flower inscrib'd with woe.²⁰
“ Ah ! who hath reft,” quoth he, “ my dearest pledge ?”
Last came and last did go.²¹
The pilot of the Galilean lake ;
Two massy keys he bore of metals twain
(The golden opes, and iron shuts amain),
He shook his mitred locks, and stern bespeak :
“ How well could I have spar'd for thee, young swain,²²
“ Enow of such, as for their bellies' sake
“ Creep, and intrude, and climb into the fold ?
“ Of other cares they little reckoning make,
“ Than how to scramble at the shearers' feast,
“ And shove away the worthy bidden guest ;
“ Blind mouths ! that scarce themselves know how to hold
“ A sheep-hook, or have learn'd aught else the least
“ That to the faithful herdman's art belongs !
“ What recks it them ? What need they ? They are sped ;
“ And, when they list, their lean and flashy songs
“ Grate on their scannel pipes of wretched straw ;
“ The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed ;
“ But swoln with wind and the rank mist they draw,
“ Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread ;
“ Besides what the grim wolf with privy paw
“ Daily devours apace, and nothing said :
“ But that two-handed engine at the door
“ Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more.”

*Return, Alpheus, the dread voice is past,*²³
That shrunk thy streams ; return, Sicilian Muse,
And call the vales, and bid them hither cast
Their bells, and flowerets, of a thousand hues.

*Ye valleys low, where the mild whispers use
Of shades, and wanton winds, and gushing brooks,
On whose fresh lap the swart-star sparely looks :
Throw hither all your quaint enamell'd eyes,
That on the green turf suck the honied showers,²⁴
And purple all the ground with vernal flowers :
Bring the rathe primrose that forsaken dies,
The tufted crow-toe, and pale jessamine,
The white pink, and the pansy *freak'd* with jet,
The glowing violet,²⁵
The musk-rose, and the well-attir'd woodbine,
With cowslips wan that hang the pensive head,
And every flower that sad embroidery wears :
Bid amaranthus all his beauty shed,
And daffodillies fill their cups with tears,
To strow the laureat hearse where Lycid lies ;
For, so to interpose a little ease,
Let our frail thoughts dally with false surmise.—
Ay me ! whilst thee the shores and sounding seas,
Wash far away, where'er thy bones are hurl'd,
Whether beyond the stormy Hebrides,
Where thou perhaps, under the whelming tide,
Visit'st the bottom of the monstrous world ;
Or whether thou, to our moist vows denied,
Sleep'st by the fable of Bellerus old,
Where the great Vision of the guarded Mount²⁶
Looks towards Namancos and Bayona's hold ;
Look homeward, Angel, now, and melt with ruth :
And, O, ye dolphins ! waft the hapless youth.*

Weep no more, woful Shepherds, weep no more,
For Lycidas your sorrow is not dead,
Sunk though he be beneath the watery floor ;
So sinks the day-star in the ocean bed,
And yet anon repairs his drooping head,
And tricks his beams, and with new-spangled ore
Flames in the forehead of the morning sky :
So Lycidas sunk low, but mounted high,
Through the dear might of Him that walk'd the waves
Where, other groves and other streams along,
With nectar pure his oozy locks he laves,
And hears the unexpressive nuptial song
In the blest kingdoms meek of joy and love.
There entertain him all the saints above,
In solemn troops and sweet societies,
That sing, and, singing, in their glory move,
And wipe the tears for ever from his eyes.

Now Lycidas, the shepherds weep no more ;
 Henceforth thou art the genius of the shore,
 In thy large recompense, and shalt be good
 To all that wander in that perilous flood.

Thus sang the uncouth swain to the oaks and rills,
While the still morn went out with sandals grey;
 He touch'd the tender stops of various quills,
With eager thought warbling his Doric lay:
 And now the sun had stretch'd out all the hills,
 And now was dropt into the western bay :
 At last he rose, and twitch'd his mantle blue :
To-morrow to fresh woods and pastures new.

⁶ “Without the meed of some melodious tear.”—Catullus uses the word in a like sense, when alluding to the elegies of Simonides in his touching expostulation with his friend, Cornificius, whom he requests to come and see him during a time of depression :—

Paulum quid lubet allocutionis
 Mæstius lacrymis Simonideis.

Prythee a little talk for ease, for ease,
 Sad as the tears of poor Simonides.

¹⁷ “Begin, and somewhat loudly,” &c.
 “Hence with denial vain,” &c.

The first of these lines has a poor prosaic effect, like one of the inane mixtures of familiarity and assumed importance in the “Pindaric” writers of the age. And “hence with denial vain” is a very unnecessary piece of harshness towards the poor Muses, who surely were not disposed to ill-treat the young poet.

¹⁸ “Clos'd o'er the head,” &c.—The very best image of drowning he could have chosen, especially during calm weather, both as regards sufferer and spectator. The combined sensations of darkness, of liquid enclosure, and of the final interposition of a heap of waters between life and the light of day, are those which most absorb the faculties of a drowning person. *Haud insubmersus loquor.*

¹⁹ “Nor yet where Deva spreads her wizard stream.”—The river Dee, in Spenser’s and Drayton’s poetry, and old British history, is celebrated for its ominous character and its magicians.

²⁰ “*Sanguine flow'r inscribed with wo.*”—The ancient poetical hyacinth, proved, I think, by Professor Martyn, in his Virgil's Georgics, to be the turk's-cap lily, the only flower on which characters like the Greek exclamation of wo, AI, AI, are to be found. The idea in Milton is from Moschus's Elegy on the Death of Bion:—

Nῦν, νάκινθε, λαλεῖ τὰ σα γραμμάτα, καὶ πλεον αἱ αἱ
Βαμβαλε σοις πεταλοῖσι.

Now more than ever say, O, hyacinth !
Ai, ai ; and babble of your written sorrows.

²¹ “*Last came and last did go.*”—“ This passage,” says Hazlitt, “ which alludes to the clerical character of Lycidas, has been found fault with, as combining the truths of the Christian religion with the fiction of the Heathen mythology. I conceive there is very little foundation for this objection, either in good reason or good taste. I will not go so far as to defend Camoens, who, in his *Lusiad*, makes Jupiter send Mercury with a dream to propagate the Catholic religion ; nor do I know that it is generally proper to introduce the two things in the same poem, though I see no objection to it here ; but of this I am quite sure, that there is no inconsistency or natural repugnance between this poetical and religious faith in the same mind. To the understanding, the belief of the one is incompatible with that of the other, but, in the imagination, they not only may, but do constantly, co-exist. I will venture to go farther, and maintain that every classical scholar, however orthodox a Christian he may be, is an honest Heathen at heart. This requires explanation. Whoever, then, attaches a reality to any idea beyond the mere name, has, to a certain extent (though not an abstract), an habitual and practical belief in it. Now, to any one familiar with the names of the personages of the heathen mythology, they convey a positive identity beyond the mere name. We refer them to something out of ourselves. It is only by an effort of abstraction that we divest ourselves of the idea of their reality ; all our involuntary prejudices are on their side. This is enough for the poet. They impose on the

imagination by the attractions of beauty and grandeur. They come down to us in sculpture and in song. We have the same associations with them as if they had really been : for the belief of the fiction in ancient times has produced all the same effects as the reality could have done. It was a reality to the minds of the ancient Greeks and Romans, and through them it is reflected to us.”—*Lectures on the English Poets* (Templeman’s edition), p. 338.

22 “*How well could I have spar’d,*” &c.—“He here animadverts,” says Warton, “to the endowments of the church, at the same time insinuating that they were shared by those only who sought the emoluments of the sacred office, to the exclusion of a learned and conscientious clergy.” An old complaint ! Meantime the church has continued mild and peaceful. An incalculable blessing !

23 “*Return, Alpheus,*” &c.—How much more sweet and Christian Paganism itself sounds, after those threats of religious violence ! The “two-handed engine” is supposed to mean the axe preparing for poor, weak, violent Laud ! Milton was now beginning to feel the sectarian influence of his father ; one, unfortunately, of a sullen and unpoetical sort.

24 “*Honied showers.*”—There is an awkwardness of construction between this and the preceding line which hurts the beautiful idea of the *flowers* “sucking the honied showers,” by seeming to attribute the suction to their “eyes.” There might, indeed, be learned allowance for such an ellipsis ; and we hardly know where to find the proper noun substantive or predicate for the verb, if it be not so ; but the image is terribly spoilt by it.

25 “*Glowing violet.*”—Why “glowing ?” The pansy (heart’s-ease) “freak’d with jet” is exquisite ; equally true to letter and spirit.

26 “*The great Vision of the guarded Mount.*”—This is the Archangel Michael, the guardian of seamen, sitting on the Mount off the coast of Cornwall known by his name, and looking towards the coast of Gallicia. It is rather surprising that Milton, with his angelical tendencies, did not take the opportunity of saying more of him. But the line is a grand one.

COMUS THE SORCERER.

THYRSIS tells the Brothers of a Lady, that their Sister has fallen into the hands of the Sorcerer Comus, dwelling in a wood.

Within the navel of this hideous wood,
Immur'd in cypress shades, a sorcerer dwells,
Of Bacchus and of Circe born,—great Comus,
Deep skill'd in all his mother's witcheries ;
And here to every thirsty wanderer
By sly enticement gives his baneful cup,
With many murmurs mix'd, whose pleasing poison
The visage quite transforms of him that drinks,
And the inglorious likeness of a beast
Fixes instead, *unmoulding reason's mintage*
Character'd in the face. This have I learnt,
Tending my flocks hard by i' the hilly crofts,
That brow this bottom-glade : whence, night by night,
He and his monstrous rout are heard to howl,
Like stabled wolves, or tigers at their prey,
Doing abhorred rites to Hecatè
In their obscurèd haunts of inmost bowers ;
Yet have they many baits and guileful spells,
To inveigle and invite the unwary sense
Of them that pass unweeting by the way.
This evening late, by then the chewing flocks²⁷
Had ta'en their supper on the savory herb
Of knot-grass dew-besprent, and were in fold,
I sat me down to watch upon a bank
With ivy canopied, and interwove
With *flaunting* honey-suckle, and began,
Wrapt in a pleasing fit of melancholy,
To meditate my rural minstrelsy,
Till fancy had her fill ; but, ere a close,
The wonted roar was up amidst the woods,
And fill'd the air with barbarous dissonance ;
At which I ceas'd, and listen'd them awhile,
Till an unusual stop of sudden silence
Gave respite to the drowsy flighted steeds,
That draw the litter of close-curtained Sleep.
At last *a soft and solemn-breathing sound*
Rose like a stream of rich distill'd perfumes,

*And stole upon the air, that even Silence
Was took ere she was ware, and wish'd she might
Deny her nature, and be never more
Still to be so displac'd. I was all ear,
And took in strains that might create a soul
Under the ribs of Death : but O ! ere long,
Too well I did perceive it was the voice
Of my most honor'd lady, your dear sister.
Amaz'd I stood, harrow'd with grief and fear,
And, O poor hapless nightingale, thought I,
How sweet thou sing'st, how near the deadly snare
Then down the lawns I ran with headlong haste,
Through paths and turnings often trod by day ;
Till, guided by mine ear, I found the place,
Where that damn'd wizard, hid in sly disguise,
(For so by certain signs I knew), had met
Already, ere my best speed could prevent,
The aidless innocent lady, his wish'd prey ;
Who gently ask'd if he had seen such two,
Supposing him some neighbor villager.
Longer I durst not stay, but soon I guess'd
Ye were the two she meant ; with that I sprung
Into swift flight, till I had found you here ;
But further know I not.*

Sec. Br. O night, and shades !
How are ye join'd with hell in triple knot
Against the unarmed weakness of one virgin,
Alone and helpless ! Is this the confidence
You gave me, Brother ?

Eld. Br. Yes, and keep it still ;
Lean on it safely ; not a period
Shall be unsaid for me : against the threats
Of malice, or of sorcery, or that power
Which erring men call chance, this I hold firm ;—
Virtue may be assail'd, but never hurt,—
Surpris'd by unjust force, but not enthrall'd ;
Yea, even that, which mischief meant most harm,
Shall in the happy trial prove most glory ;
But evil on itself shall back recoil,
And mix no more with goodness : when at last
Gather'd like scum, and settled to itself,
It shall be in eternal restless change,
Self-fed, and self-consum'd ; if this fail,
The pillar'd firmament is rottenness,
And earth's base built on stubble.

27 “*The chewing flocks*,” &c.—“The supper of the sheep,” says Warton, “is from a beautiful comparison in Spenser,—

As gentle shepherd, in sweet eventide
When ruddy Phœbus gins to welk (decline) in west,
High on a hill, his flock to viewen wide,
Marks which do bite their hasty supper best.”

Faerie Queene, I., s. 23.

“Chewing flocks” is good, but not equal to “biting their hasty supper.” It is hardly dramatical, too, in the speaker to stop to notice the sweetness and dewiness of the sheep’s grass, while he had a story to tell, and one of agitating interest to his hearers.

COLERIDGE,

BORN, 1793—DIED, 1834.

COLERIDGE lived in the most extraordinary and agitated period of modern history ; and to a certain extent he was so mixed up with its controversies, that he was at one time taken for nothing but an apostate republican, and at another for a dreaming theosophist. The truth is, that both his politics and theosophy were at the mercy of a discursive genius, intellectually bold but educationally timid, which, anxious, or rather willing, to bring conviction and speculation together, mooting all points as it went, and throwing the subtlest glancing lights on many, ended in satisfying nobody, and concluding nothing. Charles Lamb said of him, that he had “the art of making the unintelligible appear intelligible.” He was the finest dreamer, the most eloquent talker, and the most original thinker of the day ; but for want of complexional energy, did nothing with all the vast *prose* part of his mind but help the Germans to give a subtler tone to criticism, and sow a few valuable seeds of thought in minds worthy to receive them. Nine-tenths of his theology would apply equally well to their own creeds in the mouths of a Brahmin or a Mussulman.

His poetry is another matter. It is so beautiful, and was so quietly content with its beauty, making no call on the critics, and receiving hardly any notice, that people are but now beginning to awake to a full sense of its merits. Of pure poetry, strictly so called, that is to say, consisting of nothing but its essential self, without conventional and perishing helps, he was the greatest master of his time. If you would see it in a phial, like a distillation of roses (taking it, I mean, at its best), it would be found without a speck. The poet is happy with so good a gift,

and the reader is “happy in his happiness.” Yet so little, sometimes, are a man’s contemporaries and personal acquaintances able or disposed to estimate him properly, that while Coleridge, unlike Shakspeare, lavished praises on his poetic friends, he had all the merit of the generosity to himself ; and even Hazlitt, owing perhaps to causes of political alienation, could see nothing to admire in the exquisite poem of Christabel, but the description of the quarrel between the friends ! After speaking, too, of the Ancient Mariner as the only one of his poems that he could point out to any one as giving an adequate idea of his great natural powers, he adds, “It is high German, however, and in it he seems to conceive of poetry but as a drunken dream, reckless, careless, and heedless of past, present, and to come.” This is said of a poem, with which fault has been found for the exceeding conscientiousness of its moral ! O, ye critics, the best of ye, what havoc does personal difference play with your judgments ! It was Mr. Hazlitt’s only or most unwarrantable censure, or one which friendship found hardest to forgive. But peace, and honor too, be with his memory ! If he was a splenetic and sometimes jealous man, he was a disinterested politician and an admirable critic : and lucky were those whose natures gave them the right and the power to pardon him.

Coleridge, though a born poet, was in his style and general musical feeling the disciple partly of Spenser, and partly of the fine old English ballad-writers in the collection of Bishop Percy. But if he could not improve on them in some things, how he did in others, especially in the art of being thoroughly musical ! Of all our writers of the briefer narrative poetry, Coleridge is the finest since Chaucer ; and assuredly he is the sweetest of all our poets. Waller’s music is but a court-flourish in comparison ; and though Beaumont and Fletcher, Collins, Gray, Keats, Shelley, and others, have several as sweet passages, and Spenser is in a certain sense musical throughout, yet no man has written whole poems, of equal length, so perfect in the sentiment of music, so varied with it, and yet leaving on the ear so unbroken and single an effect.

*A damsel with a dulcimer
In a vision once I saw ;
It was an Abyssinian maid,
And on her dulcimer she play'd,
Singing of Mount Abora.*

That is but one note of a music ever sweet, yet never cloying.

It ceas'd ; yet still the sails made on
A pleasant noise till noon,
A noise like of a hidden brook
In the leafy month of June,
*That to the sleeping woods all night
Singeth a quiet tune.*

The stanzas of the poem from which this extract is made (*The Ancient Mariner*) generally consist of four lines only ; but see how the “brook” has carried him on with it through the silence of the night.

I have said a good deal of the versification of Christabel, in the Essay prefixed to this volume, but I cannot help giving a further quotation.

It was a lovely sight to see
The lady Christabel, when she
Was praying at the old oak tree.
*Amid the jagged shadows
Of massy leafless boughs,*
Kneeling in the moonlight
To make her gentle vows :
Her slender palms together press'd,
Heaving sometimes on her breast ;
Her face resigned to bliss or bale—
Her face, O call it fair, not pale !
And both blue eyes more bright than clear,
Each about to have a tear.

All the weeping eyes of Guido were nothing to that. But I shall be quoting the whole poem. I wish I could ; but I fear to trespass upon the bookseller's property. One more passage, however, I cannot resist. The good Christabel had been undergoing a trance in the arms of the wicked witch Geraldine :

A star hath set, a star hath risen,
 O Geraldine ! since arms of thine
 Have been the lovely lady's prison.
 O Geraldine ! one hour was thine—
 Thou hast thy will ! *By tarn and rill—*
The night-birds all that hour were still.

(An appalling fancy)

But now they are *jubilant* anew,
 From cliff and tower tu-whoo ! tu-whoo !
 Tu-whoo ! tu-whoo ! from wood and fell.

And see ! the lady Christabel

(This, observe, begins a new paragraph, with a break in the rhyme)

Gathers herself from out her trance ;
 Her limbs relax, her countenance
 Grows sad and soft ; the smooth thin lids
 Close o'er her eyes ; and tears she sheds—
Large tears that leave the lashes bright !
 And oft the while she seems to smile,
 As infants at a sudden light.

Yea, she doth smile, and she doth weep,
Like a youthful hermitess
Beauteous in a wilderness,
Who praying always, prays in sleep.
 And, if she move unquietly,
 Perchance 't is but the blood so free
 Comes back and tingles in her feet.
 No doubt she hath a vision sweet :
 What if her guardian spirit 't were ?
 What if she knew her mother near ?
 But this she knows, in joys and woes,
 The saints will aid, if men will call,
For the blue sky bends over all.

We see how such a poet obtains his music. Such forms of melody can proceed only from the most beautiful inner spirit of sympathy and imagination. He sympathizes, in his universality, with antipathy itself. If Regan or Goneril had been a young and handsome witch of the times of chivalry, and attuned her

violence to craft, or betrayed it in venomous looks, she could not have beaten the soft-voiced, appalling spells, or sudden, snake-eyed glances of the lady Geraldine,—looks which the innocent Christabel, in her fascination, feels compelled to “imitate.”

A snake's small eye blinks dull and shy,
And the lady's eyes they shrank in her head,
Each shrank up to a serpent's eye ;
And with somewhat of malice and more of dread,
At Christabel she look'd askance.

* * * * *

The maid devoid of guile and sin
I know not how, in fearful wise,
So deeply had she drunken in
That look, those *shrunken serpent eyes*,
That all her features were resign'd
To this sole image in her mind,
And passively did imitate
That look of dull and treacherous hate.

This is as exquisite in its knowledge of the fascinating tendencies of fear as it is in its description. And what can surpass a line quoted already in the Essay (but I must quote it again !) for very perfection of grace and sentiment?—the line in the passage where Christabel is going to bed, before she is aware that her visitor is a witch.

Quoth Christabel,—So let it be !
And as the lady bade, did she.
Her gentle limbs did she undress,
And lay down in her loveliness.

Oh ! it is too late now ; and habit and self-love blinded me at the time, and I did not know (much as I admired him) how great a poet lived in that grove at Highgate ; or I would have cultivated its walks more, as I might have done, and endeavored to return him, with my gratitude, a small portion of the delight his verses have given me.

I must add, that I do not think Coleridge's earlier poems at all equal to the rest. Many, indeed, I do not care to read a second time ; but there are some ten or a dozen, of which I never tire, and which will one day make a small and precious volume to

put in the pockets of all enthusiasts in poetry, and endure with the language. Five of these are *The Ancient Mariner*, *Christabel*, *Kubla Khan*, *Genevieve*, and *Youth and Age*. Some, that more personally relate to the poet, will be added for the love of him, not omitting the Visit of the Gods, from Schiller, and the famous passage on the Heathen Mythology, also from Schiller. A short life, a portrait, and some other engravings perhaps, will complete the book, after the good old fashion of Cooke's and Bell's editions of the Poets ; and then, like the contents of the Jew of Malta's casket, there will be

Infinite riches in a little room.

LOVE ; OR, GENEVIEVE.

All thoughts, all passions, all delights,
Whatever stirs this mortal frame,
Are all but ministers of Love,
And feed his sacred flame.

Oft in my waking dreams do I
Live o'er again that happy hour,
When midway on the mount I lay,
Beside the ruin'd tower.

The moonlight stealing o'er the scene,
Had blended with the lights of eve ;
And she was there, my hope, my joy,
My own dear Genevieve !

She leant against the arm'd man,
The statue of the arm'd knight ;
She stood and listen'd to my lay,
Amid the lingering light.

Few sorrows hath she of her own,
My hope ! my joy ! my Genevieve !
She loves me best whene'er I sing
The songs that make her grieve.

I play'd a soft and doleful air,
 I sang an old and moving story—
 An old rude song, that suited well
 That ruin wild and hoary.

She listen'd with a flitting blush,
 With downcast eyes and modest grace,
For well she knew I could not choose
But gaze upon her face.

I told her of the knight that wore
 Upon his shield a burning brand;
 And that for ten long years he woo'd
 The lady of the land.

I told her how he pin'd, and—ah!
The deep, the low, the pleading tone
With which I sang another's love,
Interpreted my own.

She listen'd with a flitting blush,
With downcast eyes and modest grace,
 And she forgave me, that I gaz'd
 Too fondly on her face !

But when I told the cruel scorn
 That crazed that bold and lovely knight,
 And that he cross'd the mountain-woods,
 Nor rested day nor night:

That sometimes from the savage den,
 And sometimes from the darksome shade,
And sometimes starting up at once
In green and sunny glade,

There came and look'd him in the face
An angel beautiful and bright;
And that he knew it was a fiend,
This miserable knight !

And that, unknowing what he did,
 He leap'd amid a murderous band,
 And sav'd from outrage worse than death
 The lady of the land !

And how she wept and claspt his knees ;
 And how she tended him in vain—

And ever strove to expiate
The scorn that crazed his brain;

And that she nurs'd him in a cave;
~~Then~~ now his madness went away,
When on the yellow forest leaves
A dying man he lay.

His dying words—but when I reach'd
That tenderest strain of all the ditty,
My faltering voice and pausing harp
Disturb'd her soul with pity.

All impulses of soul and sense
Had thrill'd my guileless Genevieve;
The music and the doleful tale,
The rich and balmy eve;

And hopes, and fears that kindle hope,
An undistinguishable throng,
And gentle wishes long subdued,
Subdued and cherished long.

She wept with pity and delight,
She blush'd with love and virgin shame.
And like the murmur of a dream,
I heard her breathe my name.

Her bosom heav'd—she stept aside,
As conscious of my look she stept
Then suddenly, with timorous eye,
She fled to me and wept.

She half enclos'd me in her arms,
She press'd me with a meek embrace:
And bending back her head, look'd up,
And gazed upon my face.

'Twas partly love and partly fear,
And partly 't was a bashful art
That I might rather feel than see,
The swelling of her heart.

I calm'd her fears, and she was calm,
And told her love with virgin pride,

And so I won my Genevieve,
My own, my beauteous bride !

I can hardly say a word upon this poem for very admiration. I must observe, however, that one of the charms of it consists in the numerous repetitions and revoltings of the words, one on the other, as if taking delight in their own beauty.

KUBLA KHAN.

SUGGESTED TO THE AUTHOR BY A PASSAGE IN PURCHAS'S PILGRIMAGE.

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan¹
A stately pleasure-dome decree,
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man,
Down to a sunless sea.

So twice five miles of fertile ground
With walls and towers were girdled round ;
And here were gardens bright with sinuous rills,
Where blossom'd many an incense-bearing tree ;
And here were forests ancient as the hills,
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.

*But oh, that deep romantic chasm which slanted
Down the green hill, athwart a cedarn cover !
A savage place ! as holy and enchanted
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
By woman wailing for her demon-lover !*
And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,
As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,
A mighty fountain momently was forc'd ;
Amid whose swift half-intermittent burst
Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,
Or chaffy grain beneath the thrasher's flail :
And 'mid these dancing rocks, at once and ever,
It flung up momently the sacred river.
Five miles meandering with a mazy motion,
Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,
Then reach'd *the caverns measureless to man,*
And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean :

*And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far
 Ancestral voices prophesying war.²*
 The shadow of the dome of pleasure
 Fleated midway on the waves;
 Where was heard the mingled measure
 From the fountain and the caves.
 It was a miracle of rare device,
 A sunny pleasure-dome, with caves of ice !
*A damsel with a dulcimer
 In a vision once I saw :
 It was an Abyssinian maid,
 And on her dulcimer she play'd,
 Singing of Mount Abora.*
 Could I revive within me
 Her symphony and song,
 To such a deep delight 't would win me,
*That with music loud and long,
 I would build that dome in air,
 That sunny dome ! those caves of ice !*
*And all who heard should see them there,
 And all should cry, Beware ! Beware !
 His flashing eyes, his floating hair !
 Weave a circle round him thrice,
 And close your eyes with holy dread,
 For he on honey-dew hath fed,
 And drunk the milk of Paradise.*

¹ "In Xanadu."—I think I recollect a variation of this stanza, as follows:—

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
 A stately *pleasure-house ordain*,
 Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
 Through caverns measureless to man,
 Down to a sunless *main*.

The nice-eared poet probably thought there were too many *ns* in these rhymes; and *man* and *main* are certainly not the best neighbors: yet there is such an open, sounding, and stately intonation in the words *pleasure-house ordain*, and it is so superior to *pleasure-dome decree*, that I am not sure I would not give up the correctness of the other terminations to retain it.

But what a grand flood is this, flowing down through measureless caverns to a sea without a sun ! I know no other sea equal

to it, except Keats's, in his Ode to a Nightingale ; and none can surpass that.

2 “*Ancestral voices prophesying war.*”—Was ever anything more wild, and remote, and majestic, than this fiction of the “ancestral voices ?” Methinks I hear them, out of the blackness of the past.

YOUTH AND AGE.

*Verse, a breeze 'mid blossoms straying,
Where hope clung feeding like a bee—
Both were mine ! Life went a-Maying
With Nature, Hope, and Poesy,
When I was young !*

*When I was young ? Ah, woful when !
Ah, for the change 'twixt now and then !
This breathing house not built with hands,
This body that does me grievous wrong,
O'er airy cliffs and glittering sands,
How lightly then it flash'd along !—
Like those trim skiffs, unknown of yore,
On winding lakes and rivers wide,
That ask no aid of sail or oar,
That fear no spite of wind or tide !
Naught cared this body for wind or weather,
When youth and I lived in 't together.*

*Flowers are lovely ; Love is flower-like :
Friendship is a sheltering tree ;
O the joys that came down shower-like,
Of Friendship, Love, and Liberty,
Ere I was old !*

*Ere I was old ? Ah, woful ere !
Which tells me Youth's no longer here !
O Youth ! for years so many and sweet,
'T is known, that thou and I were one ;
I'll think it but a fond deceit—
It cannot be that thou art gone !
Thy vesper-bell hath not yet toll'd,*

And thou wert aye a masker bold !
 What strange disguise hast now put on,
To make believe that thou art gone ?
I see these locks in silvery slips,
This drooping gait, this alter'd size ;
But springtide blossoms on thy lips,
And tears take sunshine from thine eyes !
 Life is but thought ; so think I will,
 That Youth and I are house-mates still.

This is one of the most perfect poems, for style, feeling, and everything, that ever were written.

THE HEATHEN DIVINITIES MERGED INTO ASTROLOGY.

FROM THE TRANSLATION OF SCHILLER'S PICCOLOMINI.

—Fable is Love's world, his home, his birthplace :
 Delightedly dwells he 'mong fays and talismans,
 And spirits ; *and delightedly believes*
Divinities, being himself divine.
 The intelligible forms of ancient poets,
 The fair humanities of old religion,
 The power, the beauty, and the majesty,
 That had her haunts in dale, or piny mountain,
 Or forest by slow stream, or pebbly spring,
 Or chasms and wat'ry depths ; all these have vanish'd ,
 They live no longer in the faith of reason ;
But still the heart doth need a language ; still
 Doth the old instinct bring back the old names ;
 And to yon starry world they now are gone,
 Spirits or gods, that used to share this earth
 With man as with their friend ; and to the lover
 Yonder they move ; from yonder visible sky
 Shoot influence down : and even at this day
'T is Jupiter who brings whate'er is great,
And Venus who brings everything that's fair.

WORK WITHOUT HOPE.

LINES COMPOSED 21ST FEBRUARY, 1827.

All Nature seems at work. Stags leave their lair—
The bees are stirring—birds are on the wing—
And Winter, slumbering in the open air,
Wears on his smiling face a dream of Spring !
And I, the while, the sole unbusy thing,
Nor honey make, nor pair, nor build, nor sing.
Yet well I ken the banks where amaranths blow,
Have traced the fount whence streams of nectar flow.
Bloom, O ye amaranths ! bloom for whom ye may ;
For me ye bloom not ! Glide, rich streams, away !
With lips unbrighten'd, wreathless brow, I stroll :
And would you learn the spells that drowse my soul ?
Work without hope draws nectar in a sieve,
And hope without an object cannot live.

I insert this poem on account of the exquisite imaginative picture in the third and fourth lines, and the terseness and melody of the whole. Here we have a specimen of a perfect style,—unsuperfluous, straightforward, suggestive, impulsive, and serene. But how the writer of such verses could talk of “work without hope,” I cannot say. What work had he better to do than to write more ? and what hope but to write more still, and delight himself and the world ? But the truth is, his mind was too active and self-involved to need the diversion of work ; and his body, the case that contained it, too sluggish with sedentary living to like it ; and so he persuaded himself that if his writings did not sell, they were of no use. Are we to disrespect these self-delusions in such a man ? No ; but to draw from them salutary cautions for ourselves,—his inferiors.

S H E L L E Y ,

BORN, 1792,—DIED, 1822.

AMONG the many reasons which his friends had to deplore the premature death of this splendid poet and noble-hearted man, the greatest was his not being able to repeat, to a more attentive public, his own protest, not only against some of his earlier effusions (which he did in the newspapers), but against all which he had written in a wailing and angry, instead of an invariably calm, loving, and therefore thoroughly helping spirit. His works, in justice to himself, require either to be winnowed from what he disliked, or to be read with the remembrance of that dislike. He had sensibility almost unique, seemingly fitter for a planet of a different sort, or in more final condition, than ours : he has said of himself,—so delicate was his organization,—that he could

“ Hardly bear
The weight of the superincumbent hour ;”

and the impatience which he vented for some years against that rough working towards good, called evil, and which he carried out into conduct too hasty, subjected one of the most naturally pious of men to charges which hurt his name, and thwarted his philanthropy. Had he lived, he would have done away all mistake on these points, and made everybody know him for what he was,—a man idolized by his friends,—studious, temperate, of the gentlest life and conversation, and willing to have died to do the world a service. For my part, I never can mention his name without a transport of love and gratitude. I rejoice to have partaken of his cares, and to be both suffering and benefiting from him at this moment ; and whenever I think of a future state, and of the great and good Spirit that must

pervade it, one of the first faces I humbly hope to see there, is that of the kind and impassioned man, whose intercourse conferred on me the title of the Friend of Shelley.

The finest poetry of Shelley is so mixed up with moral and political speculation, that I found it impossible to give more than the following extracts, in accordance with the purely poetical design of the present volume. Of the poetry of reflection and tragic pathos, he has abundance ; but even such fanciful productions as the *Sensitive Plant* and the *Witch of Atlas* are full of metaphysics, and would require a commentary of explanation. The short pieces and passages, however, before us, are so beautiful, that they may well stand as the representatives of the whole powers of his mind in the region of pure poetry. In sweetness (and not even there in passages) the Ode to the Skylark is inferior only to Coleridge,—in rapturous passion to no man. It is like the bird it sings,—enthusiastic, enchanting, profuse, continuous, and alone,—small, but filling the heavens. One of the triumphs of poetry is to associate its remembrance with the beauties of nature. There are probably no lovers of Homer and Shakspeare, who, when looking at the moon, do not often call to mind the descriptions in the eighth book of the *Iliad* and the fifth act of the *Merchant of Venice*. The nightingale (in England) may be said to have belonged exclusively to Milton (see page 178), till a dying young poet of our own day partook of the honor by the production of his exquisite Ode : and notwithstanding Shakspeare's lark singing "at heaven's gate," the longer effusion of Shelley will be identified with thoughts of the bird hereafter, in the minds of all who are susceptible of its beauty. What a pity he did not live to produce a hundred such ; or to mingle briefer lyrics, as beautiful as Shakspeare's, with tragedies which Shakspeare himself might have welcomed ! for assuredly, had he lived, he would have been the greatest dramatic writer since the days of Elizabeth, if indeed he has not abundantly proved himself such in his tragedy of the *Cenci*. Unfortunately, in his indignation against every conceivable form of oppression, he took a subject for that play too much resembling one which Shakspeare had taken in his youth, and still more unsuitable to the stage ; otherwise, besides grandeur and terror

there are things in it lovely as heart can worship ; and the author showed himself able to draw both men and women, whose names would have been “familiar in our mouths as household words.” The utmost might of gentleness, and of the sweet habitudes of domestic affection, was never more balmily impressed through the tears of the reader, than in the unique and divine close of that dreadful tragedy. Its loveliness, being that of the highest reason, is superior to the madness of all the crime that has preceded it, and leaves nature in a state of reconciliation with her ordinary course. The daughter, who is going forth with her mother to execution, utters these final words :—

Give yourself *no unnecessary pain*,
My dear Lord Cardinal. Here, mother, tie
My girdle for me, and bind up this hair
In any simple knot. Ay, that does well ;
And yours, I see is coming down. How often
Have we done this for one another ! now
We shall not do it any more. My Lord,
We are quite ready, *Well,—t is very well.*

The force of simplicity and moral sweetness cannot go further than this. But in general, if Coleridge is the sweetest of our poets, Shelley is at once the most ethereal and most gorgeous ; the one who has clothed his thoughts in draperies of the most evanescent and most magnificent words and imagery. Not Milton himself is more learned in Grecisms, or nicer in etymological propriety ; and nobody, throughout, has a style so Orphic and primæval. His poetry is as full of mountains, seas, and skies, of light, and darkness, and the seasons, and all the elements of our being, as if Nature herself had written it, with the creation and its hopes newly cast around her ; not, it must be confessed, without too indiscriminate a mixture of great and small, and a want of sufficient shade,—a certain chaotic brilliancy, “dark with excess of light.” Shelley (in the verses to a Lady with a Guitar) might well call himself Ariel. All the more enjoying part of his poetry is Ariel,—the “delicate” yet powerful “spirit,” jealous of restraint, yet able to serve ; living in the elements and the flowers ; treading the “ooze of the salt deep,” and running “on the sharp wind of the north ;” feeling for creatures

unlike himself; “flaming amazement” on them too, and singing exquisitest songs. Alas! and he suffered for years, as Ariel did in the cloven pine: but now he is out of it, and serving the purposes of Beneficence with a calmness befitting his knowledge and his love.

TO A SKYLARK.

I.

Hail to thee, blithe spirit!
Bird thou never wert,
That from heaven, or near it,
Pourest thy full heart,
In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.¹

II

Higher still and higher
From the earth thou springest,
Like a cloud of fire!
The blue deep thou wingest,
And singing, still dost soar: and soaring, ever singest

III.

*In the golden lightning
Of the sunken sun,
O'er which clouds are brightening,
Thou dost float and run;
Like an embodied joy, whose race has just begun*

IV.

The pale purple even
Melts round thy flight;
Like a star of heaven
In the broad day-light
Thou art unseen, but yet I hear thy shrill delight.

V.

Keen as are the arrows
Of that silver sphere
*Whose intense lamp narrows
In the white dawn clear,
Until we hardly see, we feel that it is there.*

VI.

All the earth and air
 With thy voice is loud
 As, when night is bare,
 From one lonely cloud
 The moon rains out her beams, and heaven is overflowed.

VII.

What thou art we know not.
 What is most like thee?
 From rainbow clouds there flow not
 Drops so bright to see,
As from thy presence showers a rain of melody

VIII.

*Like a poet hidden
 In the light of thought,
 Singing hymns unbidden,
 Till the world is wrought
 To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not.*

IX.

*Like a high-born maiden²
 In a palace tower,
 Soothing her love-laden
 Soul in secret hour
 With music sweet as love, which overflows her bower.*

X.

*Like a glow-worm golden
 In a dell of dew,
 Scattering un beholden
 Its aerial hue
 Among the flowers and grass, which screen it from the view.*

XI.

Like a rose embowered
 In its own green leaves,
 By warm winds deflowered
 Till the scent it gives
Makes faint with too much sweet these heavy-wingèd thieves

XII.

*Sound of vernal showers
 On the twinkling grass,*

*Rain-awakened flowers,
All that ever was
Joyous, and clear, and fresh, thy music doth surpass*

xiii.

Teach me, sprite or bird,
What sweet thoughts are thine:
I have never heard
Praise of love or wine
That panted forth a flood of rapture so divine.

xiv.

Chorus hymeneal,
Or triumphal chaunt,
Match'd with thine would be all
But an empty vaunt—
A thing wherein we feel there is some hidden want.

xv.

*What objects are the fountains
Of thy happy strain ?
What fields, or waves, or mountains ?
What shapes of sky or plain ?
What love of thine own kind ? What ignorance of pain ?*

xvi.

With thy clear keen joyance
Languor cannot be :
Shadow of annoyance
Never came near thee :
Thou lovest; but ne'er knew love's sad satiety.

xvii.

Waking or asleep,
Thou of death must deem
Things more true and deep
Than we mortals dream,
Or how could thy note flow in such a crystal stream?

xviii.

*We look before and after,
And pine for what is not ;
Our sincerest laughter
With some pain is fraught :
Our sweetest songs are those which tell of saddest thought.*

xix.

Yet if we could scorn
 Hate and pride and fear;
 If we were things born
 Not to shed a tear,
 I know not how thy joy we ever should come near.

xx.

*Better than all measures
 Of delightful sound,
 Better than all treasures
 That in books are found,*
 Thy skill to poet were, *thou scorner of the ground!*²

xxi.

*Teach me half the gladness,
 That thy brain must know;
 Such harmonious madness
 From my lips would flow,
 The world should listen then, as I am listening now*

“In the spring of 1820,” says Mrs. Shelley, “we spent a week or two near Leghorn, borrowing the house of some friends, who were absent on a journey to England. It was on a beautiful summer evening, while wandering among the lanes where myrtle hedges were the bowers of the fire-flies, that we heard the carolling of the skylark, which inspired one of the most beautiful of his poems.”—Moxon’s edition of 1840, p. 278.

Shelley chose the measure of this poem with great felicity. The earnest hurry of the four short lines, followed by the long effusiveness of the Alexandrine, expresses the eagerness and continuity of the lark. There is a luxury of the latter kind in Shakspeare’s song, produced by the reduplication of the rhymes:—

Hark ! hark ! the lark at heaven’s gate sings,
 And Phœbus ’gins *arise*
 His steeds to water at those springs
 On chalic’d flowers that *lies* :
 And winking mary-buds begin
 To ope their golden *eyes* :
 With everything that pretty bin,
 My lady sweet, *arise*.

"Chalic'd flowers that *lies*," is an ungrammatical license in use with the most scholarly writers of the time ; and, to say the truth, it was a slovenly one ; though there is all the difference in the world between the license of power and that of poverty.

¹ " *In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.*" — During the prevalence of the unimaginative and unmusical poetry of the last century, it was thought an Alexandrine should always be cut in halves, for the greater sweetness ; that is to say, monotony. The truth is, the pause may be thrown anywhere, or even entirely omitted, as in the unhesitating and characteristic instance before us. See also the eighth stanza. The Alexandrines throughout the poem evince the nicest musical feeling.

² *Like a high-born maiden
In a palace tower.*

Mark the accents on the word "love-laden," so beautifully carrying on the stress into the next line—

Soothing her *lòve-làden*
Sòul in secret hour.

The music of the whole stanza is of the loveliest sweetness ; of energy in the midst of softness ; of dulcitude and variety. Not a sound of a vowel in the quatrain resembles that of another, except in the rhymes ; while the very sameness or repetition of the sounds in the Alexandrine intimates the revolvment and continuity of the music which the lady is playing. Observe, for instance (for nothing is too minute to dwell upon in such beauty), the contrast of the *i* and *o* in "high-born ;" the difference of the *a* in "maiden" from that in "palace ;" the strong opposition of *maiden* to *tower* (making the rhyme more vigorous in proportion to the general softness) ; then the new differences in *soothing*, *love-laden*, *soul*, and *secret*, all diverse from one another, and from the whole strain ; and finally, the strain itself, winding up in the Alexandrine with a cadence of particular repetitions, which constitutes nevertheless a new difference on that account, and by the prolongation of the tone.

“ It gives a very echo to the seat
Where love is throned.”

There is another passage of Shakspeare which it more particularly calls to mind ;—the

Ditties highly penn'd,
Sung by a fair queen in a summer bower,
With ravishing division to her lute.

But as Shakspeare was not writing lyrically in this passage, nor desirous to fill it with so much love and sentiment, it is no irreverence to say that the modern excels it. The music is carried on into the first two lines of the next stanza :—

Like a glow-worm golden
In a dell of dew;

a melody as happy in its alliteration as in what may be termed its counterpoint. And the coloring of this stanza is as beautiful as the music.

³ “ *Thou scorner of the ground.*”—A most noble and emphatic close of the stanza. Not that the lark, in any vulgar sense of the word, “ scorns” the ground, for he dwells upon it: but that, like the poet, nobody can take leave of common-places with more heavenly triumph.

A GARISH DAY.

(SAID BY A POTENT RUFFIAN.)

The all-beholding sun yet shines; I hear
A busy stir of men about the streets;
I see the bright sky through the window-panes;
It is a garish, broad, and peering day;
Loud, light, suspicious, full of eyes and ears;
And every little corner, nook, and hole,
Is penetrated with the *insolent* light.
Come, darkness!

CONTEMPLATION OF VIOLENCE.

(BY A MAN NOT BAD.)

Spare me now,
I am as one lost in a midnight wood,
Who dares not ask some harmless passenger
The path across the wilderness, *lest he,*
As my thoughts are, should be a murderer

A ROCK AND A CHASM.

I remember,
Two miles on this side of the fort, the road
Crosses a deep ravine : 't is rough and narrow,
And winds with short turns down the precipice ;
And in its depth there is a mighty rock,
Which has, from unimaginable years,
Sustain'd itself with terror and with toil
Over a gulf, and with the agony
With which it clings seems slowly coming down ;
Even as a wretched soul, hour after hour,
Clings to the mass of life ; yet clinging, leans,
And, leaning, makes more dark the dread abyss
In which it fears to fall. Beneath this crag,
Huge as despair, as if in weariness,
The melancholy mountain yawns. Below
You hear, but see not, an impetuous torrent
Raging among the caverns : and a bridge
Crosses the chasm ; and high above these grow,
With intersecting trunks, from crag to crag,
Cedars, and yews, and pines ; whose tangled hair
Is matted in one solid roof of shade.
By the dark ivy's twine. *At noon-day here*
'Tis twilight, and at sunset blackest night.

LOVELINESS INEXPRESSIBLE.

Sweet lamp ! my moth-like muse has burnt its wings ;
 Or, like a dying swan who soars and sings,
Young Love should teach Time in his own grey style
 All that thou art. Art thou not void of guile ?
 A lovely soul form'd to be blest and bless ?
 A well of seal'd and secret happiness,
Whose waters like blithe light and music are,
Vanquishing dissonance and gloom ?—a star
Which moves not in the moving heavens, alone ?
 A smile amid dark frowns ?—a gentle tone
 Amid rude voices ?—a beloved sight ?
A Solitude, a Refuge, a Delight ?
A lute, which those whom love has taught to play,
 Make music on, to soothe the roughest day,
 And lull fond grief asleep ?—a buried treasure ?
A cradle of young thoughts of wingless pleasure ?
 A violet-shrouded grave of wo ? I measure
 The world of fancies, seeking one like thee,
And find—alas ! mine own infirmity.

EXISTENCE IN SPACE.

Life, like a dome of many-colored glass,
Stains the white radiance of eternity.

DEVOTEDNESS UNREQUIRING.

One word is too often profaned
For me to profane it ;
One feeling too falsely disdain'd
For thee to disdain it.
 One hope is too like despair
 For prudence to smother,

And pity from thee more dear
Than that from another.

I can give not what men call love ;
But wilt thou accept not
The worship the heart lifts above,
And the Heaven's reject not ?
The desire of the moth for the star
Of the night for the morrow ;
The devotion to something afar
From the sphere of our sorrow.

TO A LADY WITH A GUITAR.

Ariel to Miranda :—Take
This slave of music, for the sake
Of him who is the slave of thee ;
And teach it all the harmony
In which thou canst, and only thou,
Make the delighted spirit glow,
Till joy denies itself again,
And, too intense, is turned to pain.
For by permission and command
Of thine own Prince Ferdinand,
Poor Ariel sends this silent token
Of more than ever can be spoken :
Your guardian spirit, Ariel, who
From life to life must still pursue
Your happiness, for thus alone
Can Ariel ever find his own :
From Prospero's enchanted cell,
As the mighty verses tell,
To the throne of Naples he
Lit you o'er the trackless sea,
Flitting on, your prow before,
Like a living meteor :
When you die, the silent moon
In her *interlunar swoon*,
Is not sadder in her cell
Than deserted Ariel :
When you live again on earth,
Like an unseen star of birth,

Ariel guides you o'er the sea
Of life from your nativity,
Many changes have been run,
Since Ferdinand and you begun
Your course of love, and Ariel still
Has track'd your steps and serv'd your will.
Now in humbler, happier lot,
This is all remember'd not;
And now, alas! the poor sprite is
Imprisoned for some fault of his
In a body like a grave.
From you, he only dares to crave,
For his service and his sorrow,
A smile to-day—a song to-morrow.

The artist who this idol wrought,
To echo all harmonious thought,
Fell'd a tree, while on the steep
The woods were in their winter sleep,
Rock'd in that repose divine
On the wind-swept Appenine :
And dreaming, some of autumn past,
And some of spring approaching fast,
And some of April buds and showers,
And some of songs in July bowers,
And all of love : and so this tree—
O that such our death may be!—
Died in sleep, and felt no pain,
To live in happier form again :
From which, beneath Heaven's fairest star,
The artist wrought this lov'd Guitar,
And taught it justly to reply
To all who question skilfully,
In language gentle as thine own ;
Whispering in enamor'd tone
Sweet oracles of woods and dells,
And summer winds in sylvan cells ;
For it had learnt all harmonies
Of the plains and of the skies,
Of the forest and the mountains,
And the *many-voiced fountains*,
The clearest echoes of the hills,
The softest notes of falling rills,
The melodies of birds and bees,
The murmuring of summer seas,
And pattering rain, and breathing dew,

And airs of evening ; and it knew
 That seldom-heard mysterious sound,
 Which, driven on its diurnal round,
 As it floats through boundless day,
 Our world *enkindles* on its way :—
 All this it knows, but will not tell
 To those who cannot question well
 The spirit that inhabits it ;
It talks according to the wit
Of its companions : and no more
Is heard than has been felt before,
 By those who tempt it to betray
 These secrets of an elder day.
 But, sweetly as its answers will
Flatter hands of perfect skill,
 It keeps its highest, holiest tone
 For our beloved friend alone.

This is a Catullian melody of the first water. The transformation of the dreaming wood of the tree into a guitar was probably suggested by Catullus's Dedication of the Galley,—a poem with which I know he was conversant, and which was particularly calculated to please him ; for it records the consecration of a favorite old sea-boat to the Dioscuri. The modern poet's imagination beats the ancient ; but Catullus equals him in graceful flow ; and there is one very Shelleian passage in the original :—

Ubi iste, post phaselus, antea fuit
 Comata silva : nam Cytorio in jugo
 Loquente saepe sibilum edidit comā.

For of old, what now you see
 A galley, was a leafy tree
 On the Cytorian heights, and there
 Talk'd to the wind with whistling hair.

MUSIC, MEMORY, AND LOVE.

TO ——.

Music, when soft voices die,¹
Vibrates in the memory;
Odors, when sweet violets sicken,
Live within the sense they quicken;
Rose-leaves, when the rose is dead,
Are heap'd for the beloved's bed;
And so thy thoughts, when thou art gone,
Love itself shall slumber on.

¹ "Music, when soft voices die."—This song is a great favorite with musicians: and no wonder. Beaumont and Fletcher never wrote anything of the kind more lovely.

KEATS,

BORN, 1796,—DIED, 1821.

KEATS was a born poet of the most poetical kind. All his feelings came to him through a poetical medium, or were speedily colored by it. He enjoyed a jest as heartily as any one, and sympathized with the lowliest common-place ; but the next minute his thoughts were in a garden of enchantment, with nymphs, and fauns, and shapes of exalted humanity ;

Elysian beauty, melancholy grace.

It might be said of him, that he never beheld an oak-tree without seeing the Dryad. His fame may now forgive the critics, who disliked his politics, and did not understand his poetry. Repeated editions of him in England, France, and America, attest its triumphant survival of all obloquy ; and there can be no doubt that he has taken a permanent station among the British Poets, of a very high, if not thoroughly mature, description.

Keats's early poetry, indeed, partook plentifully of the exuberance of youth ; and even in most of his later, his sensibility, sharpened by mortal illness, tended to a morbid excess. His region is “a wilderness of sweets,”—flowers of all hue, and “weeds of glorious feature,”—where, as he says, the luxuriant soil brings

The pipy hemlock to strange overgrowth.

But there also is the “rain-scented eglantine,” and bushes of May-flowers, with bees, and myrtle, and bay,—and endless paths into forests haunted with the loveliest as well as the gentlest

beings ; and the gods live in the distance, amid notes of majestic thunder. I do not say that no "surfeit" is ever there ; but I do, that there is no end to the "nectared sweets." In what other English poet (however superior to him in other respects) are you so *certain* of never opening a page without lighting upon the loveliest imagery and the most eloquent expressions ? Name one. Compare any succession of their pages at random, and see if the young poet is not sure to present his stock of beauty ; crude it may be, in many instances ; too indiscriminate in general ; never, perhaps, thoroughly perfect in cultivation ; but there it is, exquisite of its kind, and filling envy with despair. He died at five-and-twenty ; he had not revised his earlier works, nor given his genius its last pruning. His *Endymion*, in resolving to be free from all critical trammels, had no versification ; and his last noble fragment, *Hyperion*, is not faultless,—but it is nearly so. The *Eve of St. Agnes* betrays morbidity only in one instance (noticed in the comment). Even in his earliest productions, which are to be considered as those of youth just emerging from boyhood, are to be found passages of as masculine a beauty as ever were written. Witness the *Sonnet on reading Chapman's Homer*,—epical in the splendor and dignity of its images, and terminating with the noblest Greek simplicity. Among his finished productions, however, of any length, the *Eve of St. Agnes* still appears to me the most delightful and complete specimen of his genius. It stands mid-way between his most sensitive ones (which, though of rare beauty, occasionally sink into feebleness) and the less generally characteristic majesty of the fragment of *Hyperion*. Doubtless his greatest poetry is to be found in *Hyperion* ; and had he lived, there is little doubt he would have written chiefly in that strain ; rising superior to those languishments of love which made the critics so angry, and which they might so easily have pardoned at his time of life. But the *Eve of St. Agnes* had already bid most of them adieu,—exquisitely loving as it is. It is young, but full-grown poetry of the rarest description ; graceful as the beardless Apollo ; glowing and gorgeous with the colors of romance. I have therefore reprinted the whole of it in the present volume, together with the comment alluded to in the Preface ; especially as, in

addition to felicity of treatment, its subject is in every respect a happy one, and helps to "paint" this our bower of "poetry with delight." Melancholy, it is true, will "break in" when the reader thinks of the early death of such a writer; but it is one of the benevolent provisions of nature, that all good things tend to pleasure in the recollection; when the bitterness of their loss is past, their own sweetness embalms them.

A thing of beauty is a joy for ever.

While writing this paragraph, a hand-organ out-of-doors has been playing one of the mournfullest and loveliest of the airs of Bellini—another genius who died young. The sound of music always gives a feeling either of triumph or tenderness to the state of mind in which it is heard: in this instance it seemed like one departed spirit come to bear testimony of another, and to say how true indeed may be the union of sorrowful and sweet recollections.

Keats knew the youthful faults of his poetry as well as any man, as the reader may see by the preface to *Endymion*, and its touching though manly acknowledgment of them to critical candor. I have this moment read it again, after a lapse of years, and have been astonished to think how anybody could answer such an appeal to the mercy of strength, with the cruelty of weakness. All the good for which Mr. Gifford pretended to be zealous, he might have effected with pain to no one, and glory to himself; and therefore all the evil he mixed with it was of his own making. But the secret at the bottom of such unprovoked censure is exasperated inferiority. Young poets, upon the whole,—at least very young poets,—had better not publish at all. They are pretty sure to have faults; and jealousy and envy are sure to find them out, and wreak upon them their own disappointments. The critic is often an unsuccessful author, almost always an inferior one to a man of genius, and possesses his sensibility neither to beauty nor to pain. If he does,—if by any chance he is a man of genius himself (and such things have been), sure and certain will be his regret, some day, for having given pains which he might have turned into

noble pleasures ; and nothing will console him but that very charity towards himself, the grace of which can only be secured to us by our having denied it to no one.

Let the student of poetry observe, that in all the luxury of the Eve of Saint Agnes there is nothing of the conventional craft of artificial writers ; no heaping up of words or similes for their own sakes or the rhyme's sake ; no gaudy common-places ; no borrowed airs of earnestness ; no tricks of inversion ; no substitution of reading or of ingenious thoughts for feeling or spontaneity ; no irrelevancy or unfitness of any sort. All flows out of sincerity and passion. The writer is as much in love with the heroine as his hero is ; his description of the painted window, however gorgeous, has not an untrue or superfluous word ; and the only speck of a fault in the whole poem arises from an excess of emotion.

THE EVE OF SAINT AGNES.¹

I.

St. Agnes' Eve—Ah ! bitter chill it was :

The owl, for all his feathers, was a-cold ;²

The hare limp'd trembling through the frozen grass,

And silent was the flock in woolly fold ;

Numb were the beadsman's fingers while he told

His rosary, and while his frosted breath,

Like pious incense from a censer old,

Seem'd taking flight for heaven without a death

Past the sweet Virgin's picture, while his prayer he saith.³

II.

His prayer he saith, this patient, holy man,

Then takes his lamp, and riseth from his knees,

And back returneth, meagre, barefoot, wan,

Along the chapel aisle by slow degrees :

The sculptur'd dead on each side seem'd to freeze,

Imprison'd in black, purgatorial rails :

Knights, ladies, praying in dumb orat'ries,

He passeth by ; and his weak spirit fails

To think how they may ache in icy hoods and mails.⁴

III.

Northward he turneth through a little door,
 And scarce three steps, ere music's golden tongue
Flatter'd to tears this aged man and poor :⁵
 But no; already had his death-bell rung :
 The joys of all his life were said and sung :
 His was harsh penance on St. Agnes' Eve :
 Another way he went, and soon among
 Rough ashes sat he, for his soul's reprieve ;
 And all night kept awake, for sinners' sake to grieve.

IV.

That ancient beadsman heard the prelude soft ;
 And so it chanc'd (for many a door was wide,
 From hurry to and fro) soon up aloft
The silver-snarling trumpets 'gan to chide ;
 The level chambers ready with their pride,
 Were glowing to receive a thousand guests :
And carved angels, ever eager-eyed,
Stared, where upon their heads the cornice rests,
With hair blown back, and wings put cross-wise on their breasts.

V.

At length burst in the argent revelry
 With plume, tiara, and all rich array,
 Numerous as shadows haunting fairly
 The brain, new stuff'd, in youth, with triumphs gay
 Of old romance. These let us wish away,
 And turn, sole-thoughted, to one lady there,
 Whose heart had brooded all that wintry day
 On love, and wing'd St. Agnes' saintly care,
 As she had heard old dames full many times declare

VI.

They told her how, upon St. Agnes' Eve,
 Young virgins might have visions of delight ;
 And soft adorings from their loves receive
Upon the honey'd middle of the night
 If ceremonies due they did aright ;
 As, supperless to bed they must retire,
 And couch supine their beauties, lily white :
 Nor look behind or sideways, but require
 Of Heaven with upward eyes for all that they desire.

VII.

Full of this whim was youthful Madeline ;
The music, yearning, like a god in pain,
 She scarcely heard ; her maiden eyes divine,
 Fix'd on the floor, saw many a sweeping train
 Pass by, she heeded not at all ; in vain
 Came many a tip-toe amorous cavalier,
 And back retired, not cool'd by high disdain,
 But she saw not ; her heart was otherwhere ;
 She sigh'd for Agnes' dreams, the sweetest of the year.

VIII.

She danc'd along with vague, regardless eyes,
 Anxious her lips, her breathing quick and short ;
 The hallow'd hour was near at hand : she sighs
 Amid the timbrels and the throng'd resort
 Of whisperers in anger or in sport ;
 'Mid looks of love, defiance, hate, and scorn ;
Hoodwink'd with faery fancy ; all amort,
 Save to St. Agnes and her lambs unshorn,
 And all the bliss to be before to-morrow morn.

IX.

So, purposing each moment to retire,
 She linger'd still. Meantime across the moers,
 Had come young Porphyro, with heart on fire
 For Madeline. Beside the portal doors
 Buttress'd from moonlight, stands he, and implores
 All saints to give him sight of Madeline,
 But for one moment in the tedious hours,
 That he might gaze and worship all unseen,
 Perchance speak, kneel, touch, kiss ;—in sooth such things have been

X.

He ventures in, let no buzz'd whisper tell ;
 All eyes be muffled, or a hundred swords
 Will storm his heart, Love's feverous citadel.
 For him those chambers had barbarian hordes,
 Hyæna foemen, and hot-blooded lords,
 Whose very dogs would execrations howl
 Against his lineage. Not one breast affords
 Him any mercy, in that mansion foul,
Save one old beldame, weak in body and in soul.

XI.

Ah ! happy chance ! the aged creature came
 Shuffling along with ivory-headed wand,

To where he stood, hid from the torches' light,
 Behind a broad hall pillar, far beyond
 The sound of merriment and chorus bland.
 He startled her ; but soon she knew his face,
 And grasp'd his fingers in her palsied hand :
 Saying, " Mercy, Porphyro ! hie thee from this place.
 They are all here to-night, the whole blood-thirsty race.

xii.

" Get hence ! get hence ! there's dwarfish Hildebrand,
 He had a fever late, and in the fit
 He cursèd thee and thine, both house and land :
 Then there's that old Lord Maurice, *not a whit*
More tame for his grey hairs—Alas, me ! flit;
 Flit like a ghost away."—" Ah, gossip dear,
 We're safe enough ; here in this arm-chair sit,
 And tell me how—"—" Good Saints ! not here ! not here !
 Follow me, child, or else these stones will be thy bier !"

xiii.

He follow'd through a lowly, archèd way,
 Brushing the cobwebs with his lofty plume ;
 And as she mutter'd, " Well-a-well-a-day !"
 He found him *in a little moonlight room*,⁶
Pale, latticed, chill, and silent as a tomb
 " Now tell me where is Madeline," said he ;
 " Oh, tell me, Angela, by the holy loom
 Which none but secret sisterhood may see,
 When they St. Agnes' wool are weaving piously."

xiv.

" St. Agnes ! Ah ! it is St. Agnes' Eve—
 Yet men will murder upon holidays ;
 Thou must hold water in a witch's sieve,
 And be the liege lord of all elves and fays,
 To venture so : it fills me with amaze
 To see thee, Porphyro !—St. Agnes' Eve !
 God's help ! my lady fair the conjuror plays
 This very night : good angels her deceive !
 But let me laugh awhile ; I 've mickle time to grieve

xv.

Feebly she laugheth in the languid moon,
 While Porphyro upon her face doth look,
 Like puzzled urchin on an aged crone,

Who keepeth clos'd a wondrous riddle-book,
 As spectacled she sits in chimney nook ;
 But soon his eyes grow brilliant, when she told
 His lady's purpose ; and he scarce could brook
 Tears, at the thought of those enchantments cold,
And Madeline asleep in lap of legends old.

xvi.

Sudden a thought came, *like a full-blown rose*,
 Flushing his brow, and in his painèd heart
 Made purple riot ; then doth he propose
 A stratagem, that makes the beldame start.
 "A cruel man and impious thou art ;
 Sweet lady ! let her pray, and sleep and dream,
 Alone with her good angels far apart
 From wicked men like thee. Go ! go ! I deem
 Thou canst not, surely, be the same that thou dost seem."

xvii.

"I will not harm her, by all saints, I swear!"
 Quoth Porphyro ; "Oh, may I ne'er find grace,
 When my weak voice shall whisper its last prayer,
 If one of her soft ringlets I displace,
 Or look with *ruffian passion* in her face !
 Good Angela, believe me, by these tears,
 Or I will, even in a moment's space,
 Awake with horrid shout my foemen's ears,
 And beard them, though they be more fang'd than wolves and bears."

xviii.

"Ah ! why wilt thou affright a feeble soul ?
 A poor, weak, palsy-stricken, *churchyard* thing,
 Whose passing bell may ere the midnight toll ;
 Whose prayers for thee, each morn and evening,
 Were never miss'd?" Thus plaining, doth she bring
 A gentler speech from burning Porphyro,
 So woful and of such deep sorrowing,
 That Angela gives promise she will do
 Whatever he shall wish, betide or weal or wo :

xix.

Which was to lead him in close secrecy
 Even to Madeline's chamber, and there hide
 Him in a closet, of such privacy
 That he might see her beauty unespied.

And win perhaps that night a peerless bride,
While legion'd fairies paced the coverlet,
And pale enchantment held her sleepy-eyed
 Never on such a night have lovers met,
 Since Merlin paid his demon all the monstrous debt.⁸

xx.

" It shall be as thou wishest," said the dame ;
 " All cates and dainties shall be storèd there,
 Quickly on this feast-night ; by the tambour frame
 Her own lute thou wilt see : no time to spare,
 For I am slow and feeble, and scarce dare,
 On such a catering, trust my dizzy head.
 Wait here, my child, with patience ; kneel in prayer
 The while ; ah ! thou must needs the lady wed ;
 Or may I never leave my grave among the dead !"

xxi.

So saying, she hobbled off with busy fear ;
 The lover's endless minute slowly pass'd,
 The dame return'd, and whisper'd in his ear
 To follow her, with aged eyes aghast
 From fright of dim espial. Safe at last
 Through many a dusky gallery, they gain
 The maiden's chamber, *silken, hush'd and chaste,*
 Where Porphyro took covert, pleas'd amain :
 His poor guide hurried back with agues in her brain

xxii.

Her faltering hand upon the balustrade,
 Old Angela was feeling for the stair,
 When Madeline, St. Agnes' charmed maid,
 Rose, like a mission'd spirit, unaware ;
 With silver taper-light, and pious care
 She turn'd, and down the aged gossip led
 To a safe level matting. Now prepare,
 Young Porphyro, for gazing on that bed ;
 She comes, she comes again, like ring-dove fray'd and fled.

xxiii.

Out went the taper as she hurried in ;
*Its little smoke in pallid moonshine died :*⁹
 She clos'd the door, she panteth all akin
 To spirits of the air, and visions wide ;
 Nor utter'd syllable, or " Wo betide !"
But to her heart her heart was voluble,

*Paining with eloquence her balmy side :
As though a tongueless nightingale should swell
Her throat in vain, and die heart-stifled in her dell.*

xxiv.

*A casement high and triple-arch'd there was,
All garlanded with carven imageries
Of fruits, and flowers, and bunches of knot-grass,
And diamonded with panes of quaint device,
Innumerable of stains and splendid dyes.
As are the tiger-moth's deep damask'd wings ;
And in the midst, 'mong thousand heraldries,
And twilight saints, and dim emblazonings,
A shielded scutcheon blush'd with blood of queens and kings.¹⁰*

xxv.

Full on this casement shone the wintry moon,
And threw warm gules on Madeline's fair breast,
As down she knelt for heaven's grace and boon :
Rose-bloom fell on her hands together prest,
And on her silver cross soft amethyst,
And on her hair a glory like a saint ;
She seem'd a splendid angel, newly drest,
Save wings for heaven :—Porphyro grew faint—¹¹
She knelt so pure a thing, so free from mortal taint.

xxvi.

Anon his heart revives : her vespers done,
Of all its wreathèd pearls her hair she frees ;
Unclasps her *warmèd* jewels one by one ;¹²
Loosens her fragrant boddice ; *by degrees*
Her rich attire creeps rustling to her knees :
Half hidden, *like a mermaid in sea-weed,*
Pensive awhile she dreams awake, and sees
In fancy fair St. Agnes in her bed,
But dares not look behind, or all the charm is fled.

xxvii.

Soon, trembling in her soft and chilly nest,
In sort of wakeful swoon, perplex'd she lay,
Until the poppied warmth of sleep oppress'd
Her smoothèd limbs, and soul, fatigued away,
Flown, like a thought, until the morrow day ;
Blissfully haven'd both from joy and pain ;
Clasp'd like a missal, where swart Paynims pray ;
Blinded alike from sunshine and from rain,
As though a rose should shut, and be a bud again.¹³

xxviii.

Stol'n to this paradise and so entranc'd,
 Porphyro gaz'd upon her empty dress,
 And listen'd to her breathing if it chanc'd
 To wake unto a slumb'rous tenderness :
 Which when he heard, that minute did he bless,
 And breath'd himself; then from the closet crept,
Noiseless as fear in a wild wilderness,
 And over the hush'd carpet silent stept,
 And 'tween the curtains peep'd, where lo ! how fast she slept.

xxix.

Then, by the bedside, where the faded moon
Made a dim silver twilight,—soft he set
 A table, and, half-anguish'd, threw thereon
 A cloth of woven crimson, gold, and jet :—
 O, for some drowsy Morphean amulet !
 The boist'rous, midnight, festive clarion,
 The kettle-drum and far-heard clarionet,
 Affray his ears, though but in dying tone :—
 The hall-door shuts again, and all the noise is gone.

xxx.

And still she slept *an azure-lidded sleep*
 In blanched linen, smooth and lavender'd,
 While he from forth the closet brought a heap
 Of candied apple, quince, and plum, and gourd,
 With jellies soother than the creamy curd,
*And lucent syrups tinct with cinnamon :*¹⁴
 Manna and dates, in argosy transferr'd
 From Fez ; and spicèd dainties every one,
From silken Samarcand to cedar'd Lebanon.

xxxI.

These delicacies he heap'd with glowing hand
 On golden dishes and in baskets bright
 Of wreathèd silver ; sumptuously they stand
 In the retirèd quiet of the night,
Filling the chilly room with perfume light.
 “ And now, my love, my seraph fair, awake !
 Thou art my heaven, and I thine eremite.
 Open thine eyes for meek St. Agnes’ sake,
 Or I shall drowse beside thee, so my soul doth ache.”

xxxII.

Thus whispering, his warm, unnervèd arm
 Sank in her pillow. Shaded was her dream

By the dusk curtains ;—'twas a midnight charm
 Impossible to melt as icèd stream :
 The lustrous salvers in the moonlight gleam ;
 Broad golden fringe upon the carpet lies ;
 It seem'd he never, never could redeem
 From such a steadfast spell his lady's eyes ;
 So mus'd awhile, entoil'd in woofèd fantasies

xxxxIII.

Awakening up, he took her hollow lute,—
 Tumultuous,—and, in chords that tenderest be,
 He play'd an ancient ditty, long since mute,
 In Provence call'd, “ La belle dame sans mercy :”
 Close to her ear touching the melody ;—
 Wherewith disturb'd she utter'd a soft moan :
 He ceas'd—she panted quick—and suddenly
 Her blue affrayèd eyes wide open shone :
 Upon his knees he sank, pale as smooth sculptured stone

xxxxIV.

Her eyes were open, but she still beheld,
 Now wide awake, the vision of her sleep ;
 There was a painful change that nigh expell'd
 The blisses of her dream, so pure and deep,
 At which fair Madeline began to weep,
 And moan forth witless words with many a sigh ;
 While still her gaze on Porphyro would keep ;
 Who knelt, with joined hands and piteous eye,
 Fearing to move or speak, she look'd so dreamingly

xxxxV.

“ Ah Porphyro !” said she, “ but even now
 Thy voice was a sweet tremble in mine ear,
 Made tunable with every sweetest vow ;
 And those sad eyes were spiritual and clear ;
 How chang'd thou art ! how pallid, chill, and drear !—
 Give me that voice again, my Porphyro,
 Those looks immortal, those complainings dear ;
 Oh ! leave me not in this eternal wo,
 For if thou diest, my love, I know not where to go ”

xxxxVI.

Beyond a mortal man impassion'd far¹⁵
At these voluptuous accents he arose,
Ethereal, flush'd, and like a throbbing star

*Seen 'mid the sapphire heaven's deep repose ;
Into her dream he melted, as the rose
Blendeth its odors with the violet,—
Solution sweet. Meantime the frost wind blows
Like love's alarm, pattering the sharp sleet
Against the window panes : St. Agnes' moon hath set.*

XXXVII.

'T is dark ; quick pattereth the flaw-blown sleet :
" This is no dream ; my bride, my Madeline !"
'T is dark : the icèd gusts still rave and beat.
" No dream, alas ! alas ! and wo is mine ;
Porphyro will leave me here to rave and pine ;
Cruel ! what traitor could thee hither bring !
I curse not, for my heart is lost in thine,
Though thou forsakest a deceivèd thing ;—
A dove, forlorn and lost, with sick unpruned wing."

XXXVIII.

" My Madeline, sweet dreamer ! lovely bride !
Say, may I be for aye thy vassal blest ?
*Thy beauty's shield, heart-shap'd, and vermeil-dyed ?*¹⁶
Ah ! silver shrine, here will I take my rest,
After so many hours of toil and quest—
A famish'd pilgrim, saved by miracle :
Though I have found, I will not rob thy nest,
Saving of thy sweet self; if thou think'st well
To trust, fair Madeline, to no rude infidel.

XXXIX.

" Hark ! 't is an elfin storm from faery land,
Of haggard seeming, but a boon indeed.
Arise,—arise !—the morning is at hand ;
The bloated wassailers will never heed ;
Let us away, my love, with happy speed ;
There are no ears to hear, nor eyes to see,—
Drown'd all in Rhenish and the sleepy mead :
Awake ! arise ! my love, and fearless be ;
For o'er the southern moors I have a home for thee."

XL.

She hurried at his words, beset with fears,
For there were sleeping dragons all around
At glaring watch, perhaps with ready spears.
Down the wide stairs a darkling way they found,—

In all the house was heard no human sound
 A chain-droop'd lamp was flickering by each door ;
 The arras, rife with horseman, hawk and hound,
 Flutter'd in the besieging winds' uproar ;
*And the long carpets rose along the gusty floor.*¹⁷

XL.

They glide like phantoms into the wide hall ;
 Like phantoms to the inner porch they glide,
 Where lay the porter, in uneasy sprawl,
 With a huge empty flagon by his side ;
 The watchful blood-hound rose, and shook his hide,
 But his sagacious eye an inmate own'd :
 By one, and one, the bolts full easy slide :
 The chains lie silent on the foot-worn stones :
 The key turns, and the door upon its hinges groans.

XLII.

And they are gone ; ay, ages long ago,
 These lovers fled away *into the storm.*
 That night the Baron dreamt of many a wo,
 And all his warrior guests, with shade and form
 Of witch, and demon, and large coffin-worm,
 Were long benighted. Angela the old
 Died palsy-twitch'd, with meagre face deform :
 The beadsman, after thousand aves told,
 For aye unsought-for slept among his ashes cold.

¹ “*The Eve of St. Agnes.*”—St. Agnes was a Roman virgin, who suffered martyrdom in the reign of Dioclesian. Her parents, a few days after her decease, are said to have had a vision of her, surrounded by angels and attended by a white lamb, which afterwards became sacred to her. In the Catholic Church, formerly, the nuns used to bring a couple of lambs to her altar during mass. The superstition is (for I believe it is still to be found), that, by taking certain measures of divination, damsels may get a sight of their future husbands in a dream. The ordinary process seems to have been by fasting. Aubrey (as quoted in “Brand's Popular Antiquities”) mentions another, which is, to take a row of pins, and pull them out one by one, saying a Paternoster ; after which, upon going to bed, the dream is sure to ensue. Brand quotes Ben Jonson :—

And on sweet St. Agnes' night,
Pleas'd you with the promis'd sight,
Some of husbands, some of lovers,
Which an empty dream discovers.

² “*The owl, for all his feathers, was a-cold.*”—Could he have selected an image more warm and comfortable in itself, and, therefore, better contradicted by the season? We feel the plump, feathery bird, in his nook, shivering in spite of his natural household warmth, and staring out at the strange weather. The hare cringing through the chill grass is very piteous, and the “silent flock” very patient; and how quiet and gentle, as well as wintry, are all these circumstances, and fit to open a quiet and gentle poem! The breath of the pilgrim, likened to “pious incense,” completes them, and is a simile in admirable “keeping,” as the painters call it; that is to say, is thoroughly harmonious with itself and all that is going on. The breath of the pilgrim is visible, so is that of a censer; the censer, after its fashion, may be said to pray; and its breath, like the pilgrim’s, ascends to heaven. Young students of poetry may, in this image alone, see what imagination is, under one of its most poetical forms, and how thoroughly it “tells.” There is no part of it unsitting. It is not applicable in one point, and the reverse in another.

³ “*Past the sweet Virgin’s picture,*” &c.—What a complete feeling of winter-time is in this stanza, together with an intimation of those Catholic elegances, of which we are to have more in the poem!

⁴ “*To think how they may ache,*” &c.—The germ of the thought, or something like it, is in Dante, where he speaks of the figures that perform the part of sustaining columns in architecture. Keats had read Dante in Mr. Cary’s translation, for which he had a great respect. He began to read him afterwards in Italian, which language he was mastering with surprising quickness. A friend of ours has a copy of Ariosto containing admiring marks of his pen. But the same thought may have struck one poet as well as another. Perhaps there are few that have not felt something like it on seeing the figures upon tombs. Here, however, for the first time, we believe, in English poetry, it is expressed, and with what feeling and elegance! Most wintry

as well as penitential is the word "aching" in "icy hoods and mails;" and most felicitous the introduction of the Catholic idea in the word "purgatorial." The very color of the rails is made to assume a meaning, and to shadow forth the gloom of the punishment—

Imprisoned in black purgatorial rails.

⁵ "Flattered to tears."—This "flattered" is exquisite. A true poet is by nature a metaphysician; far greater in general than metaphysicians professed. He feels instinctively what the others get at by long searching. In this word "flattered" is the whole theory of the secret of tears; which are the tributes, more or less worthy, of self-pity to self-love. Whenever we shed tears, we take pity on ourselves; and we feel, if we do not consciously say so, that we deserve to have the pity taken. In many cases, the pity is just, and the self-love not to be construed unhandsomely. In many others it is the reverse; and this is the reason why selfish people are so often found among the tear-shedders, and why they seem never to shed them for others. They imagine themselves in the situation of others, as indeed the most generous must, before they can sympathize; but the generous console as well as weep. Selfish tears are niggardly of everything but themselves.

"Flattered to tears." Yes, the poor old man was moved, by the sweet music, to think that so sweet a thing was intended for his comfort, as well as for others. He felt that the mysterious kindness of Heaven did not omit even his poor, old, sorry case, in its numerous workings and visitations; and, as he wished to live longer, he began to think that his wish was to be attended to. He had begun to think how much he had suffered—how much he had suffered wrongly and mysteriously—and how much better a man he was, with all his sins, than fate seemed to have taken him for. Hence he found himself deserving of tears and self-pity, and he shed them, and felt soothed by his poor, old, loving self. Not undeservedly either; for he was a painstaking pilgrim, aged, patient, and humble, and willingly suffered cold and toil for the sake of something better than he

could otherwise deserve ; and so the pity is not exclusively on his own side : we pity him, too, and would fain see him out of that cold chapel, gathered into a warmer place than the grave. But it was not to be. We must therefore console ourselves in knowing, that this icy endurance of his was the last, and that he soon found himself at the sunny gate of heaven.

⁶ “*A little moonlight room.*”—The poet does not make his “little moonlight room” comfortable, observe. The high taste of the exordium is kept up. All is still wintry. There is to be no comfort in the poem, but what is given by love. All else may be left to the cold walls.

⁷ “*Tears.*”—He almost shed tears of sympathy, to think how his treasure is exposed to the cold ; and of delight and pride, to think of her sleeping beauty, and her love for himself. This passage, “asleep in lap of legends old,” is in the highest imaginative taste, fusing together the imaginative and the spiritual, the remote and the near. Madeline is asleep in her bed ; but she is also asleep in accordance with the legends of the season : and therefore the bed becomes *their* lap as well as sleep’s. The poet does not critically think of all this ; he feels it : and thus should other young poets draw upon the prominent points of their feelings upon a subject, sucking the essence out of them into analogous words, instead of beating about the bush for *thoughts*, and, perhaps, getting clever ones, but not thoroughly pertinent, not wanted, not the best. Such, at least, is the difference between the truest poetry and the degrees beneath it.

⁸ Since Merlin paid his demon all the monstrous debt.

What he means by Merlin’s “monstrous debt,” I cannot say. Merlin, the famous enchanter, obtained King Arthur his interview with the fair Iogerne ; but though the son of a devil, and conversant with the race, I am aware of no debt that he owed them. Did Keats suppose that he had sold himself, like “Faustus ?”

⁹ Its little smoke in pallid moonshine died.

This is a verse in the taste of Chaucer, full of minute grace and

truth. The smoke of the wax-taper seems almost as ethereal and fair as the moonlight, and both suit each other and the heroine. But what a lovely line is the seventh about the heart,

Paining with eloquence her balmy side !

And the nightingale ! how touching the simile ! the heart a “tongueless nightingale,” dying in the bed of the bosom. What thorough sweetness, and perfection of lovely imagery ! How one delicacy is heaped upon another ! But for a burst of richness, noiseless, colored, suddenly enriching the moonlight, as if a door of heaven were opened, read the stanza that follows.

¹⁰ *A shielded scutcheon blush'd with blood of queens and kings.*

Could all the pomp and graces of aristocracy, with Titian's and Raphael's aid to boot, go beyond the rich religion of this picture, with its “twilight saints,” and its scutcheons, “blushing with the blood of queens ?”

¹¹ “*Save wings for heaven.*”—The lovely and innocent creature, thus praying under the gorgeous painted window, completes the exceeding and unique beauty of this picture,—one that will for ever stand by itself in poetry, as an addition to the stock. It would have struck a glow on the face of Shakspeare himself. He might have put Imogen or Ophelia under such a shrine. How proper as well as pretty the heraldic term *gules*, considering the occasion. “Red” would not have been a fiftieth part as good. And with what elegant luxury he touches the “silver cross” with “amethyst,” and the fair human hand with “rose-color,” the kin of their carnation ! The lover's growing “faint” is one of the few inequalities which are to be found in the latter productions of this great but young and over-sensitive poet. He had, at the time of his writing this, the seeds of a mortal illness in him, and he doubtless wrote as he had felt, for he was also deeply in love ; and extreme sensibility struggled in him with a great understanding.

¹² “*Unclasps her warmed jewels.*”—How true and cordial the *warmed* jewels, and what matter of fact also, made elegant, in

the rustling downward of the attire ; and the mixture of dress and undress, and of the dishevelled hair, likened to a “mermaid in sea-weed !” But the next stanza is perhaps the most exquisite in the poem.”

¹³ “*As though a rose had shut.*”—Can the beautiful go beyond this ? I never saw it. And how the imagery rises ! flown like a thought—blissfully *haven'd*—clasp'd like a missal in a land of *Pagans* : that is to say, where Christian prayer-books must not be seen, and are, therefore, doubly cherished for the danger. And then, although nothing can surpass the preciousness of this idea, is the idea of the beautiful, crowning all—

*Blinded alike from sunshine and from rain,
As though a rose should shut, and be a bud again.*

Thus it is that poetry, in its intense sympathy with creation, may be said to create anew, rendering its words more impressive than the objects they speak of, and individually more lasting ; the spiritual perpetuity putting them on a level (not to speak it profanely) with the fugitive compound.

¹⁴ “*Lucent syrups tinct with cinnamon.*”—Here is delicate modulation, and super-refined epicurean nicety !

Lucent syrups tinct with cinnamon ;

make us read the line delicately, and at the tip-end, as it were, of one's tongue.

¹⁵ “*Beyond a mortal man.*”—Madeline is half awake, and Porphyro reassures her, with loving, kind looks, and an affectionate embrace.

¹⁶ “*Heart-shap'd and vermeil-dyed.*”—With what a pretty wilful conceit the costume of the poem is kept up in this line about the shield ! The poet knew when to introduce apparent trifles forbidden to those who are void of real passion, and who, feeling nothing intensely, can intensify nothing.

¹⁷ “*Carpets rose.*”—This is a slip of the memory, for there were hardly carpets in those days. But the truth of the painting makes amends, as in the unchronological pictures of old masters.

LONELY SOUNDS.

Undescribed sounds
That come *a-swooning* over hollow grounds,
And wither drearily on barren moors.

ORION.

At this, with madden'd stare,
And lifted hands, and trembling lips he stood,
Like old Deucalion mountain'd o'er the flood,
Or blind Orion hungry for the morn.

CIRCE AND HER VICTIMS.

Fierce, wan,
And tyrannizing was the lady's look,
As over them a gnarlèd staff she shook.
Ofttimes upon the sudden she laugh'd out,
And from a basket emptied to the rout
Clusters of grapes, the which they raven'd quick
And roar'd for more, with many a hungry lick
About their shaggy jaws. Avenging, slow,
Anon she took a branch of mistletoe,
And emptied on 't a black dull-gurgling phial :
Groan'd one and all, as if some piercing trial
Were sharpening for their pitiable bones.
She lifted up the charm : appealing groans
From their poor breasts went suing to her ear
In vain : *remorseless as an infant's bier,*
She whisk'd against their eyes the sooty oil ;
Whereat was heard a noise of *painful toil*,
Increasing gradual to a tempest rage,
Shrieks, yells, and groans, of torture pilgrimage.

A BETTER ENCHANTRESS IMPRISONED IN THE SHAPE OF A SERPENT.

She was a gordian shape of dazzling hue,
Vermilion-spotted, golden, green, and blue,
Striped like a zebra, speckled like a pard,
Eyed like a peacock, *and all crimson-barr'd,*
And full of silver moons, that as she breath'd
Dissolv'd or brighter shone, or interwreath'd
Their lustres with the gloomier tapestries.
So, *rainbow-sided, full of miseries,*
See seem'd, at once, some penanc'd lady elf,
Some demon's mistress, or the demon's self.
Upon her crest she wore *a wannish fire*
Sprinkled with stars, like Ariadne's tiar;
Her head was serpent; *but ah, bitter sweet!*
She had a woman's mouth, with all its pearls complete

SATURN DETHRONED.

Deep in the shady sadness of a vale,
Far sunken from the healthy breath of morn,
Far from the fiery noon, *and eve's one star,*
Sat grey-hair'd Saturn, quiet as a stone,
Still as the silence round about his lair;
Forest on forest hung about his head,
Like cloud on cloud. No stir of air was there,
Not so much life as on a summer's day
Robs not one light seed from the feather'd grass,
But where the dead leaf fell, there did it rest.
A stream went voiceless by, still deaden'd more
By reason of his fallen divinity
Spreading a shade: the Naiad, 'mid her reeds,
Press'd her cold finger closer to her lips.
Along the margin sand large footmarks went,
Nor further than to where his feet had stray'd,
And slept there since. Upon the sodden ground
His old right hand lay nerveless, listless, dead,
Unsceptred; and his *realmless eyes* were closed.

THE VOICE OF A MELANCHOLY GODDESS SPEAKING TO SATURN.

*As when upon a trancèd summer-night
Those green-robed senators of mighty woods,
Tall oaks, branch-charmèd by the earnest stars,
Dream, and so dream all night without a stir,
Save from one gradual solitary gust,
Which comes upon the silence, and dies off,
As if the ebbing air had but one wave :
So came these words, and went.*

A FALLEN GOD.

The bright Titan, frenzied with new woes,
Unus'd to bend, by hard compulsion, bent
His spirit to the sorrow of the time ;
*And all along a dismal rack of clouds,
Upon the boundaries of day and night,
He stretch'd himself, in grief and radiance faint.*

OTHER TITANS FALLEN.

Scarce images of life, one here, one there,
*Lay vast and edgeways ; like a dismal cirque
Of Druid stones, upon a forlorn moor,*
*When the chill rain begins at shut of eve
In dull November, and their chancel vault,
The heaven itself, is blinded throughout night*

ODE TO A NIGHTINGALE.¹⁸

My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
 My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,
 Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains
 One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk.
 'T is not through envy of thy happy lot,
 But being too happy in thy happiness,
 That thou, *light-winged Dryad of the trees,*
 In some *melodious plot*
 Of beeches green, *and shadows numberless,*
Singest of summer in full-throated ease.

O for a draught of vintage, that hath been
 Cool'd a long age in the deep-delvèd earth,
 Tasting of Flora and the country-green,
 Dance, and Provençal song, and sun-burnt mirth !
 O for a beaker full of the warm South,
 Full of the true, the blushing Hippocrène,
 With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
 And purple-stainèd mouth ;
 That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,
 And with thee fade away into the forest dim :

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget
 What thou among the leaves hast never known,
 The weariness, the fever, and the fret
 Here, where men sit, and hear each other groan ;
 Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last grey hairs ;
 Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies ,
 Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
 And leaden-eyed despairs ;
 Where beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
 Or new love pine at them beyond to-morrow.

Away ! away ! for I will fly to thee,
 Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,
 But on the viewless wings of Poesy,
 Though the dull brain perplexes and retards ;
 Already with thee ! tender is the night,
 And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,
 Cluster'd around by all her starry Fays ;

But here there is no light,
Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown
Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways.

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
But, in embalmèd darkness, guess each sweet
Wherewith the seasonable month endows
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild ;
White-hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine ;
Fast-fading violets, cover'd up in leaves ;
And mid-May's eldest child,
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.

Darkling I listen ; and, for many a time,
I have been *half in love with easeful Death,*
Call'd him soft names in many a musèd rhyme
To take into the air my quiet breath ;
Now more than ever seems it *rich* to die,
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
In such an ecstacy !
Still wouldest thou sing, and I have ears in vain—
To thy high requiem become a sod.

Thou wast not born for death, immortal bird !
No hungry generations tread thee down :
The voice I hear this passing night was heard
In ancient days by emperor and clown ;
Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
Through the sad heart of Ruth, *when, sick for home,*
She stood in tears amid the alien corn ;
The same that oftentimes hath
Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam
*Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.*¹⁹

Forlorn ! the very word is like a bell
To toll me back from thee to my sole self !
Adieu ! the fancy cannot cheat so well
As she is fam'd to do, deceiving elf.
Adieu ! adieu ! *thy plaintive anthem fades*
Past the near meadows, over the still stream,
Up the hill side ; and now 't is buried deep
In the next valley-glades ?
Was it a vision, or a waking-dream !
Fled is that music ? Do I wake or sleep ?

¹⁸ “*Ode to a Nightingale.*”—This poem was written in a house at the foot of Highgate Hill, on the border of the fields looking towards Hampstead. The poet had then his mortal illness upon him, and knew it. Never was the voice of death sweeter.

¹⁹ “*Charm'd magic casements,*” &c.—This beats Claude's Enchanted Castle, and the story of King Beder in the Arabian Nights. You do not know what the house is, or where, nor who 'the bird. Perhaps a king himself. But you see the window, open on the perilous sea, and hear the voice from out the trees in which it is nested, sending its warble over the foam.. The whole is at once vague and particular, full of mysterious life. You see nobody, though something is heard ; and you know not what of beauty or wickedness is to come over that sea. Perhaps it was suggested by some fairy tale. I remember nothing of it in the dream-like wildness of things in Palmerin of England, a book which is full of color and home landscapes, ending with a noble and affecting scene of war ; and of which Keats was very fond.

ON FIRST LOOKING INTO CHAPMAN'S HOMER.

Much have I travell'd in the realms of gold,
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen ;
Round many western islands have I been,
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold
Oft of one wide expanse had I been told,
That deep-brow'd Homer ruled as his demesne ;
Yet did I never breathe its pure serene,
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold :
Then felt I like some watcher of the skies,
When a new planet swims into his ken ;
Or like stout Cortez, when with eagle eyes
He star'd at the Pacific²⁰—and all his men
Look'd at each other with a wild surmise—
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.²¹

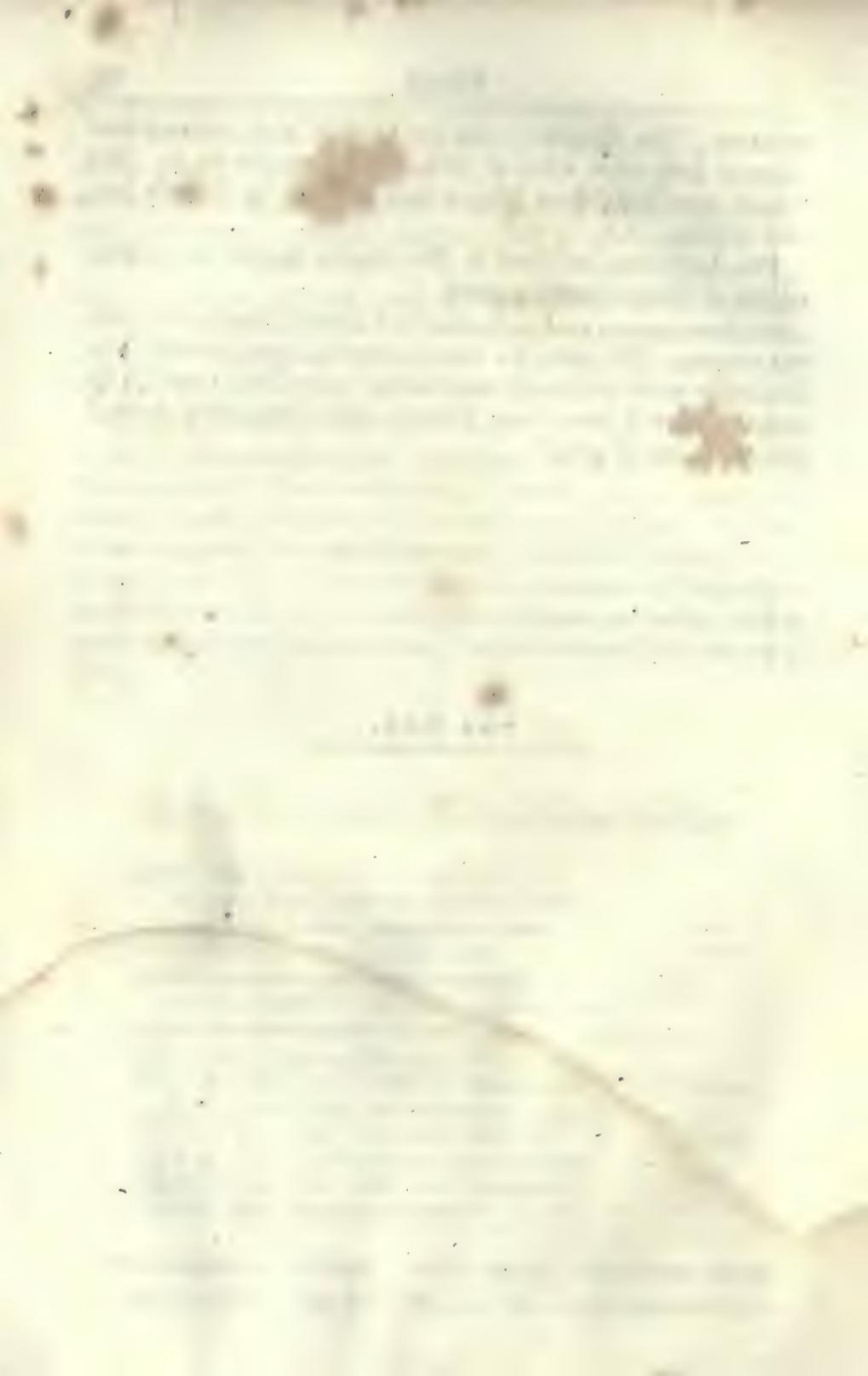
²⁰ “*He stared at the Pacific,*” &c.—“Stared” has been thought by some too violent, but it is precisely the word required by the

occasion. The Spaniard was too original and ardent a man either to look, or to affect to look, coldly superior to it. His "eagle eyes" are from life, as may be seen by Titian's portrait of him.

The public are indebted to Mr. Charles Knight for a cheap reprint of Homer and Chapman.

■ " *Silent, upon a peak in Darien.*"—A most fit line to conclude our volume. We leave the reader standing upon it, with all the illimitable world of thought and feeling before him, to which his imagination will have been brought, while journeying through these "realms of gold."

THE END.



T H E G E N I U S,

AND

C H A R A C T E R O F B U R N S.

BY PROFESSOR WILSON.

OF THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH,

AUTHOR OF THE LIGHTS AND SHADOWS OF SCOTTISH
LIFE; THE RECOLLECTIONS OF CHRISTOPHER
NORTH, ETC., ETC.

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ON THE
GENIUS AND CHARACTER OF BURNS.

BY PROFESSOR WILSON.

BURNS is by far the greatest poet that ever sprung from the bosom of the people, and lived and died in an humble condition. Indeed, no country in the world but Scotland could have produced such a man; and he will be for ever regarded as the glorious representative of the genius of his country. He was born a poet, if ever man was, and to his native genius alone is owing the perpetuity of his fame. For he manifestly had never very deeply studied poetry as an art, nor reasoned much about its principles, nor looked abroad with the wide ken of intellect for objects and subjects on which to pour out his inspiration. The condition of the peasantry of Scotland, the happiest, perhaps, that providence ever allowed to the children of labor, was not surveyed and speculated on by him as the field of poetry, but as the field of his own existence; and he chronicled the events that passed there, not merely as food for his imagination as a poet, but as food for his heart as a man. Hence, when inspired to compose poetry, poetry came gushing up from the well of his human affections, and he had nothing more to do, than to pour it, like streams irrigating a meadow, in many a cheerful tide over the drooping flowers and fading verdure of life. Imbued with vivid perceptions, warm feelings, and strong

passions, he sent his own existence into that of all things, animate and inanimate, around him ; and not an occurrence in hamlet, village, or town, affecting in any way the happiness of the human heart, but roused as keen an interest in the soul of Burns, and as genial a sympathy, as if it had immediately concerned himself and his own individual welfare. Most other poets of rural life have looked on it through the aerial veil of imagination—often beautified, no doubt, by such partial concealment, and beaming with a misty softness more delicate than the truth. But Burns would not thus indulge his fancy where he had felt—felt so poignantly, all the agonies and all the transports of life. He looked around him, and when he saw the smoke of the cottage rising up quietly and unbroken to heaven, he knew, for he had seen and blessed it, the quiet joy and unbroken contentment that slept below ; and when he saw it driven and dispersed by the winds, he knew also but too well, for too sorely had he felt them, those agitations and disturbances which had shook him till he wept on his chaff bed. In reading his poetry, therefore, we know what unsubstantial dreams are all those of the golden age. But bliss beams upon us with a more subduing brightness through the dim melancholy that shrouds lowly life ; and when the peasant Burns rises up in his might as Burns the poet, and is seen to derive all that might from the life which at this hour the peasantry of Scotland are leading, our hearts leap within us, because that such is our country, and such the nobility of her children. There is no delusion, no affectation, no exaggeration, no falsehood in the spirit of Burns's poetry. He rejoices like an untamed enthusiast, and he weeps like a prostrate penitent. In joy and in grief the whole man appears : some of his finest effusions were poured out before he left the fields of his childhood, and when he scarcely hoped for other auditors than his own heart, and the simple dwellers of the hamlet. He wrote not to please or surprise others—we speak of those first effusions—but in his own creative delight ; and even after he had discovered his power to kindle the sparks of nature wherever they slumbered, the effect to be produced seldom seems to have been considered by him, assured that his poetry could not fail to produce the same pas-

sion in the hearts of other men from which it boiled over in his own. Out of himself, and beyond his own nearest and dearest concerns, he well could, but he did not much love often or long to go. His imagination wanted not wings broad and strong for highest flights. But he was most at home when walking on this earth, through this world, even along the banks and braes of the streams of Coila. It seems as if his muse were loth to admit almost any thought, feeling, image, drawn from any other region than his native district—the hearth-stone of his father's hut—the still or troubled chamber of his own generous and passionate bosom. Dear to him the jocund laughter of the reapers on the corn-field, the tears and sighs which his own strains had won from the children of nature enjoying the mid-day hour of rest beneath the shadow of the hedgerow tree. With what pathetic personal power, from all the circumstances of his character and condition, do many of his humblest lines affect us! Often, too often, as we hear him singing, we think that we see him suffering! “Most musical, most melancholy” he often is, even in his merriment! In him, alas! the transports of inspiration are but too closely allied with reality's kindred agonies! The strings of his lyre sometimes yield their finest music to the sighs of remorse or repentance. Whatever, therefore, be the faults or defects of the poetry of Burns—and no doubt it has many—it has, beyond all that ever was written, this greatest of all merits, intense, life-pervading, and life-breathing truth.

There is probably not a human being come to the years of understanding in all Scotland, who has not heard of the name of Robert Burns. It is, indeed, a household word. His poems are found lying in almost every cottage in the country, on the “window sole” of the kitchen, spence, or parlor; and in the town-dwellings of the industrious poor, if books belong to the family at all, you are pretty sure to see there the dear Ayrshire Ploughman. The father or mother, born and long bred, perhaps, among banks and braes, possesses, in that small volume, a talisman that awakens in a moment all the sweet visions of the past, and that can crowd the dim abode of hard-working poverty, with a world of dear rural remembrances that awaken not repining but contentment.

No poet ever lived more constantly and more intimately in the hearts of a people. With their mirth, or with their melancholy, how often do his “native wood-notes wild” affect the sitters by the ingles of low-roofed homes, till their hearts overflow with feelings that place them on a level, as moral creatures, with the most enlightened in the land, and more than reconcile them with, make them proud of, the condition assigned them by Providence! There they see with pride the reflection of the character and condition of their own order. That pride is one of the best natural props of poverty; for, supported by it, the poor envy not the rich. They exult to know and to feel that they have had treasures bequeathed to them by one of themselves—treasures of the heart, the intellect, the fancy, and the imagination, of which the possession and the enjoyment are one and the same, as long as they preserve their integrity and their independence. The poor man, as he speaks of Robert Burns, always holds up his head and regards you with an elated look. A tender thought of the “Cottar’s Saturday Night,” or a bold thought of “Scots wha hae wi’ Wallace bled,” may come across him; and he who in such a spirit loves home and country, by whose side may he not walk an equal in the broad eye of day as it shines over our Scottish hills? This is true popularity. Thus interpreted, the word sounds well, and recovers its ancient meaning. The land “made blithe with plough and harrow,”—the broomy or the heathery braes—the holms by the river’s side—the forest where the woodman’s ringing axe no more disturbs the cushat—the deep dell where all day long sits solitary plaided boy or girl watching the kine or the sheep—the moorland hut without any garden—the lowland cottage, whose garden glows like a very orchard, when crimsoned with fruit-blossoms most beautiful to behold—the sylvan homestead sending its reek aloft over the huge sycamore that blackens on the hill-side—the straw-roofed village gathering with small bright crofts its many white gable-ends round and about the modest manse, and the kirk-spire covered with the pine-tree that shadows its horologe—the small, quiet, half-slated half-thatched rural town,—there resides, and will for ever reside, the immortal genius of Burns. Oh, that he, the prevailing Poet, could have seen this light

breaking in upon the darkness that did too long and too deeply overshadow his lot ! Some glorious glimpses of it his prophetic soul did see ; witness "The Vision," or that somewhat humbler but yet high strain, in which, bethinking him of the undefined aspirations of his boyhood he said to himself—

" Even then a wish, I mind its power,
A wish that to my latest hour,
Shall strongly heave my breast,
That I, for poor auld Scotland's sake,
Some useful plan or book would make,
Or sing a sang at least !

" The rough bur-thistle spreading wide
Amang the bearded bear,
I turned the weeder-clips aside
And spared the symbol dear."

Such hopes were with him in his "bright and shining youth," surrounded as it was with toil and trouble that could not bend his brow from its natural upward inclination to the sky ; and such hopes, let us doubt it not, were also with him in his dark and faded prime, when life's lamp burned low indeed, and he was willing at last, early as it was, to shut his eyes on this dearly beloved but sorely distracting world.

With what strong and steady enthusiasm is the anniversary of Burns's birth-day celebrated, not only all over his own native land, but in every country to which an adventurous spirit has carried her sons ! On such occasions, nationality is a virtue. For what else is the "Memory of Burns," but the memory of all that dignifies and adorns the region that gave him birth ? Not till that region is shorn of all its beams—its honesty, its independence, its moral worth, its genius, and its piety, will the name of Burns

" Die on her ear, a faint unheeded sound."

But it has an immortal life in the hearts of young and old, whether sitting at gloaming by the ingle-side, or on the stone seat in the open air, as the sun is going down, or walking among the summer mists on the mountain, or the blinding winter snows.

In the life of the poor there is an unchanging and a preserving spirit. The great elementary feelings of human nature there disdain fluctuating fashions ; there pain and pleasure are alike permanent in their outward shows as in their inward emotions ; there the language of passion never grows obsolete ; and at the same passage you hear the child sobbing at the knee of her grandame whose old eyes are somewhat dimmer than usual with a haze that seems almost to be of tears. Therefore, the poetry of Burns will continue to charm, as long as Nith flows, Criffel is green, and the bonny blue of the sky of Scotland meets with that in the eyes of her maidens, as they walk up and down her hills silent or singing to kirk or market.

Let us picture to ourselves the Household in which Burns grew up to manhood, shifting its place without much changing its condition, from first to last always fighting against fortune, experiencing the evil and the good of poverty, and in the sight of men obscure. His father may be said to have been an elderly man when Robert was born, for he was within a few years of forty, and had always led a life of labor ; and labor it is that wastes away the stubbornest strength—among the tillers of the earth a stern ally of time. “His lyart haffets wearing thin and bare” at an age when many a forehead hardly shows a wrinkle, and when thick locks cluster darkly round the temples of easy living men. The sire who “turns o’er wi’ patriarchal pride the big Ha-Bible,” is indeed well-stricken in years, but he is not an old man, for

“The expectant *wee things* toddlin’, stacher through
To meet their dad wi’ flichterin’ noise and glee ;
His wee bit ingle, blinking bonnily ;
His clean hearth-stane, his thriftie wifie’s smile,
The lisping infant Prattling on his knee,
Does a’ his weary carking cares beguile,
And makes him quite forget his labor and his toil.”

That picture, Burns, as all the world knows, drew from his father. He was himself, in imagination, again one of the “wee things” that ran to meet him ; and “the priest-like father” had long worn that aspect before the poet’s eyes, though he died before he was threescore. “I have always considered William

Burnes," says the simple-minded, tender-hearted Murdoch, "as by far the best of the human race that ever I had the pleasure of being acquainted with, and many a worthy character I have known. He was a tender and affectionate father; he took pleasure in leading his children in the paths of virtue, not in driving them, as some people do, to the performance of duties to which they themselves are averse. He took care to find fault very seldom; and, therefore, when he did rebuke, he was listened to with a kind of reverential awe. I must not pretend to give you a description of all the manly qualities, the rational and Christian virtues, of the venerable William Burnes. I shall only add that he practised every known duty, and avoided everything that was criminal; or, in the apostle's words, 'herein did he exercise himself, in living a life void of offence towards God and towards man.' Although I cannot do justice to the character of this worthy man, yet you will perceive, from these few particulars, what kind of a person had the principal part in the education of the poet." Burns was as happy in a mother, whom, in countenance, it is said he resembled; and as sons and daughters were born, we think of the "auld clay biggin" more and more alive with cheerfulness and peace.

His childhood, then, was a happy one, secured from all evil influences and open to all good, in the guardianship of religious parental love. Not a boy in Scotland had a better education. For a few months, when in his sixth year, he was at a small school at Alloway Miln, about a mile from the house in which he was born; and for two years after under the tuition of good John Murdoch, a young scholar whom William Burnes and four or five neighbors engaged to supply the place of the schoolmaster, who had been removed to another situation, lodging him, as is still the custom in some country places, by turns in their own houses. "The earliest composition I recollect taking pleasure in, was the *Vision of Mirza*, and a hymn of Addison's, beginning '*How are thy servants bless'd, O Lord!*' I particularly remember one half stanza which was music to my boyish ear,

'For though on dreadful whirls we hang,
High on the broken wave.'

I met with these pieces in *Mason's English Collection*, one of my school-books. The two first books I ever read in print, and which gave me more pleasure than any two books I ever read since, were the *Life of Hannibal*, and the *History of Sir William Wallace*. Hannibal gave my young ideas such a turn that I used to strut in raptures up and down after the recruiting drum and bagpipe, and wished myself tall enough to be a soldier; while the story of Wallace poured a tide of Scottish prejudice into my veins, which will boil along there till the floodgates of life shut in eternal rest." And speaking of the same period and books to Mrs. Dunlop, he says, "For several of my earlier years I had few other authors; and many a solitary hour have I stole out, after the laborious vocations of the day, to shed a tear over their glorious but unfortunate stories. In these boyish days, I remember, in particular, being struck with that part of Wallace's story, where these lines occur—

‘Syne to the Leglen wood, when it was late,
To make a silent and a safe retreat.’

I chose a fine summer Sunday, the only day my line of life allowed, and walked half a dozen miles to pay my respects to the Leglen wood, with as much devout enthusiasm as ever pilgrim did to Loretto; and explored every den and dell where I could suppose my heroic countryman to have lodged." Murdoch continued his instructions until the family had been about two years at Mount Oliphant, and there being no school near us, says Gilbert Burns, and our services being already useful on the farm, "my father undertook to teach us arithmetic on the winter nights by candle-light; and in this way my two elder sisters received all the education they ever had." Robert was then in his ninth year, and had owed much, he tells us, to "an old woman who resided in the family, remarkable for her ignorance, credulity, and superstition. She had, I suppose, the largest collection in the country of tales and songs concerning devils, ghosts, fairies, brownies, witches, warlocks, spunkies, kelpies, elf-candles, dead lights, wraiths, apparitions, cantrips, giants and enchanted towers, dragons, and other trumpery. This cultivated the latent seeds of poetry; but had so strong an effect

on my imagination, that to this hour, in my nocturnal rambles, I sometimes keep a sharp look-out on suspicious places ; and though nobody can be more sceptical than I am in such matters, yet it often takes an effort of philosophy to shake off these idle terrors."

We said, that not a boy in Scotland had a better education than Robert Burns, and we do not doubt that you will agree with us ; for, in addition to all that may be contained in those sources of useful and entertaining knowledge, he had been taught to read, not only in the *Spelling Book*, and *Fisher's English Grammar*, and *The Vision of Mirza*, and *Addison's Hymns*, and *Titus Andronicus* (though on Lavinia's entrance "with her hands cut off, and her tongue cut out," he threatened to burn the book) ; but in THE NEW TESTAMENT AND THE BIBLE, and all this in his father's house, or in the houses of the neighbours ; happy as the day was long, or the night, and in the midst of happiness ; yet even then, sometimes saddened, no doubt, to see something more than solemnity or awfulness on his father's face, that was always turned kindly towards the children, but seldom wore a smile.

Wordsworth had these memorials in his mind when he was conceiving the boyhood of the Pedlar in his great poem, the *Excursion*.

" But eagerly he read and read again,
 Whate'er the minister's old shelf supplied ;
 The life and death of martyrs, who sustained
 With will inflexible, those fearful pangs
 Triumphant displayed in records left
 Of persecution, and the covenant, times
 Whose echo rings through Scotland to this hour ;
 And there, by lucky hap, had been preserved
 A straggling volume, torn and incomplete,
 That left half-told the preternatural tale,
 Romance of giants, chronicle of fiends,
 Profuse in garniture of wooden cuts
 Strange and uncouth ; dire faces, figures dire,
 Sharp-knee'd, sharp-elbowed, and lean-angled too,
 With long and ghastly shanks—forms which once seen
 Could never be forgotten. In his heart
 Where fear sate thus, a cherished visitant,
 Was wanting yet the pure delight of love

By sound diffused, or by the breathing air,
Or by the silent looks of happy things,
Or flowing from the universal face
Of earth and sky. But he had felt the power
Of nature, and already was prepared,
By his intense conceptions, to receive
Deeply the lesson deep of love, which he
Whom nature, by whatever means, has taught
To feel intensely, cannot but receive.

SUCH WAS THE BOY.

Such was the boy ; but his studies had now to be pursued by fits and snatches, and, therefore, the more eagerly and earnestly, during the intervals or at the close of labor, that before his thirteenth year had become constant and severe. "The cheerless gloom of a hermit, with the unceasing moil of a galley-slave ! " These are his own memorable words, and they spoke the truth. "For nothing could be more retired," says Gilbert, "than our general manner of living at Mount Oliphant ; we scarcely saw any but members of our own family. There were no boys of our own age, or near it, in the neighborhood." They all worked hard from morning to night, and Robert hardest of them all. At fifteen he was the principal laborer on the farm, and relieved his father from holding the plough. Two years before he had assisted in thrashing the crop of corn. The two noble brothers saw with anguish the old man breaking down before their eyes ; nevertheless assuredly, though they knew it not, they were the happiest boys "the evening sun went down upon." "True," as Gilbert tells us, "I doubt not but the hard labor and sorrow of this period of his life was in a great measure the cause of that depression of spirits with which Robert was so often afflicted through his whole life afterwards. At this time he was almost constantly afflicted in the evenings with a dull head-ache, which at a future period of his life was exchanged for a palpitation of the heart, and a threatening of fainting and suffocation in his bed in the night-time." Nevertheless, assuredly both boys were happy, and Robert the happier of the two ; for if he had not been so, why did he not go to sea ? Because he loved his parents too well to be able to leave them, and because, too, it was his duty to stay by them, were he to drop down at midnight in

the barn and die with the flail in his hand. But if love and duty cannot make a boy happy, what can ? Passion, genius, a teeming brain, a palpitating heart, and a soul of fire. These too were his, and idle would have been her tears, had Pity wept for young Robert Burns.

Was he not hungry for knowledge from a child ? During these very years he was devouring it ; and soon the dawn grew day. " My father," says Gilbert, " was for some time the only companion we had. He conversed familiarly on all subjects with us, as if we had been men ; and was at great pains, while we accompanied him in the labors of the farm, to lead the conversation to such subjects as might tend to increase our knowledge, or confirm us in virtuous habits. He borrowed Salmon's Geographical Grammar for us, and endeavored to make us acquainted with the situation and history of the different countries in the world ; while from a book society in Ayr, he procured for us the reading of Durham's Physico and Astro Theology, and Ray's Wisdom of God in the Creation. Robert read all these books with an avidity and industry scarcely to be equalled. My father had been a subscriber to Stackhouse's History of the Bible. From this Robert collected a competent knowledge of ancient history ; *for no book was so voluminous as to slacken his industry, or so antiquated as to damp his researches.*" He kept reading too at the Spectator, Pope and Pope's Homer, some plays of Shakspeare, Boyle's Lectures, Locke on the Human Understanding, Hervey's Meditations, Taylor's Scripture Doctrine of Original Sin, the works of Allan Ramsay and Smollet, and A COLLECTION OF SONGS. " That volume was my *Vade Mecum.* I pored over them, during my work, or walking to labor, song by song, verse by verse, carefully noticing the true tender or sublime from affectation or fustian ; and I am convinced I owe to this practice most of my critic-craft, such as it is."

So much for book-knowledge ; but what of the kind that is born within every boy's own bosom, and grows there till often that bosom feels as if it would burst ? To Mr. Murdoch, Gilbert always appeared to possess a more lively imagination, and to be more of a wit than Robert. Yet imagination or wit he had none. His face said, " Mirth, with thee I mean to live ;" yet he was

through life sedate. Robert himself says that in childhood he was by no means a favorite with anybody—but he must have been mistaken; and “the stubborn sturdy something in his disposition” hindered him from seeing how much he was loved. The tutor tells us he had no ear for music, and could not be taught a psalm tune! Nobody could have supposed that he was ever to be a poet! But nobody knew anything about him—nor did he know much about himself; till Nature, who had long kept, chose to reveal, her own secret.

“ You know our country custom of coupling a man and woman together as partners in the labor of harvest. In my fifteenth autumn my partner was a bewitching creature, a year younger than myself. My scarcity of English denies me the power of doing her justice in that language; she was a *bonnie, sweet, sonsie lass*. In short, she altogether, unwittingly to herself, initiated me in that delicious passion, which, in spite of acid disappointment, gin-horse prudence, and bookworm philosophy, I hold to be the first of human joys, our sweetest blessing here below. How she caught the contagion I could not tell: you medical people talk much of infection from breathing the same air, the touch, &c., but I never expressly said I loved her. Indeed I did not know myself why I liked so much to loiter behind with her, when returning in the evening from our labors; why the tones of her voice made my heart-strings thrill like an Eolian harp; and particularly why my pulse beat such a furious ratan when I looked and fingered over her little hand, to pick out the cruel nettle-stings and thistles. Among her other love-inspiring qualities, she sang sweetly; and it was a favorite reel to which I attempted giving an embodied vehicle in rhyme. I was not so presumptuous as to imagine that I could make verses like printed ones, composed by men who had Greek and Latin; but my girl sang a song which was said to be composed by a small country laird’s son, on one of his father’s maids with whom he was in love; and I saw no reason why I might not rhyme as well as he; for, excepting that he could smear sheep, and cast peats, his father living on the moorlands, he had no more scholar craft than myself. *“THUS WITH ME BEGAN LOVE AND POETRY.”*”

And during those seven years, when his life was “the cheer-

less gloom of a hermit, with the unceasing moil of a galley-slave," think ye not that the boy Poet was happy, merely because he had the blue sky over his head, and the green earth beneath his feet? He who ere long invested the most common of all the wild-flowers of the earth with immortal beauty to all eyes, far beyond that of the rarest, till a tear as of pity might fall down manly cheeks on the dew-drop nature gathers on its "snawie bosom, sunward spread!"

"Wee, modest, crimson-tipped flower,
Thou's met me in an evil hour;
For I maun crush amang the stoure
 Thy slender stem;
To spare thee now is past my pow'r,
 Thou bonnie gem.

"Alas! it's no thy neebor sweet,
The bonnie Lark, companion meet,
Bending thee 'mang the dewy weet!
 Wi' speckled breast,
When upward-springing, blythe to greet
 The purpling east."

Thus far the life of this wonderful being is blameless—thus far it is a life of virtue. Let each season, with him and with all men, have its due meed of love and praise—and, therefore, let us all delight to declare how beautiful was the Spring! And was there in all those bright and bold blossoms a fallacious promise? Certainly not of the fruits of genius; for these far surpassed what the most hopeful could have predicted of the full-grown tree. But did the character of the man belie that of the boy? Was it manifested at last, either that the moral being had undergone some fatal change reaching to the core, or that it had been from the first hollow, and that these noble-seeming virtues had been delusions all?

The age of puberty has passed with its burning but blameless loves, and Robert Burns is now a man. Other seven years of the same kind of life as at Mount Oliphant, he enjoys and suffers at Lochlea. It is sad to think that his boyhood should have been so heavily burthened; but we look with no such thoughts on his manhood, for his strength is knit, and the sinews of soul

and body are equal to their work. He still lives in his father's house, and he still upholds it; he still reverences his father's eyes that are upon him; and he is still a dutiful son—certainly not a prodigal. "During the whole of the time we lived at Lochlea with my father, he allowed my brother and me such wages for our labor as he gave to other laborers, as a part of which, every article of our clothing manufactured in the family was regularly accounted for. When my father's affairs were near a crisis, Robert and I took the farm of Mossiel, consisting of 118 acres, at £90 per annum, as an asylum for the family in case of the worst. It was stocked by the property and individual savings of the whole family, and was a joint concern among us. Every member of the family was allowed ordinary wages for the labor he performed on the farm. My brother's allowance and mine, was £7 per annum each, and during the whole time this family concern lasted, which was four years, as well as during the preceding period at Lochlea, his expenses never in one year exceeded his slender income. As I was intrusted with the keeping of the family accounts, it is not possible that there can be any fallacy in this statement, in my brother's favor. *His temperance and frugality were everything that could be wished.*" During his residence for six months in Irvine, indeed, where he wrought at the business of a flax-dresser, with the view of adopting that trade, that he might get settled in life, paid a shilling a week for his lodging, and fed on meal and water, with some wild boon-companions he occasionally lived rather free. No doubt he sometimes tasted the "Scotch drink," of which he ere long sung the praises; but even then, his inspiration was from "a well-head undefiled." He was as sober a man as his brother Gilbert himself, who says, "I do not recollect, during these seven years, to have ever seen him intoxicated, nor was he at all given to drinking." We have seen what were his virtues—for his vices, where must we look?

During all these seven years, the most dangerous in the life of every one, that of Robert Burns was singularly free from the sin to which nature is prone; nor had he drunk of that guilty cup of the intoxication of the passions, that bewilders the virtue, and changes their wisdom into foolishness, of the discreet-

est of the children of men. But drink of it at last he did ; and like other sinners seemed sometimes even to glory in his shame. But remorse puts on looks, and utters words, that being interpreted, have far other meanings ; there may be recklessness without obduracy ; and though the keenest anguish of self-reproach be no proof of penitence, it is a preparation for it in nature—a change of heart can be effected only by religion. How wisely he addresses his friend !

“ The sacred lowe o’ weel placed love,
 Luxuriously indulge it ;
 But never tempt th’ illicit rove
 Though naething should divulge it
 I wave the quantum of the sin,
 The hazard o’ concealing ;
But oh ! it hardens a’ within,
And petrifies the feeling !”

It was before any such petrifaction of feeling had to be deplored by Robert Burns that he loved Mary Campbell, his “Highland Mary,” with as pure a passion as ever possessed young poet’s heart ; nor is there so sweet and sad a passage recorded in the life of any other one of all the sons of song. Many such partings there have been between us poor beings—blind at all times, and often blindest in our bliss—but all gone to oblivion. But that hour can never die—that scene will live for ever. Immortal the two shadows standing there, holding together the Bible—a little rivulet flowing between—in which, as in consecrated water, they have dipt their hands, water not purer than, at that moment, their united hearts.

There are few of his songs more beautiful, and none more impassioned than

“ Ye banks, and braes, and streams around,
 The castle o’ Montgomery,
 Green be your woods, and fair your flowers,
 Your waters never drumlie !
 There simmer first unfaulds her robes,
 And there the langest tarry ;
 For there I took the last fareweel
 O’ my sweet Highland Mary.”

But what are lines like these to his “Address to Mary in Heaven!” It was the anniversary of the day on which he heard of her death—that to him was the day on which she died. He did not keep it as a day of mourning—for he was happy in as good a wife as ever man had, and cheerfully went about the work of his farm. But towards the darkening “he appeared to grow very sad about something,” and wandered out of doors into the barn-yard, where his Jean found him lying on some straw with his eyes fixed on a shining star “like another moon.”

“Thou lingering star, with less’ning ray,
That lov’st to greet the early morn,
Again thou usher’st in the day
My Mary from my soul was torn.
O Mary! dear departed shade!
Where is thy place of blissful rest?
See’st thou thy lover lowly laid?
Hear’st thou the groans that rend his breast!”

He wrote them all down just as they now are, in their immortal beauty, and gave them to his wife. Jealousy may be felt even of the dead. But such sorrow as this the more endeared her husband to her heart—a heart ever faithful—and at times when she needed to practise that hardest of all virtues in a wife—forgiving; but here all he desired was her sympathy—and he found it in some natural tears.

William Burnes was now—so writes Robert to one of his cousins—“in his own opinion, and indeed in almost everybody’s else, in a dying condition”—far gone in a consumption, as it was called; but dying, though not sixty, of old age at last. His lot in this life was in many things a hard one, but his blessings had been great, and his end was peace. All his children had been dutiful to their parents, and to their care he confided their mother. If he knew of Robert’s transgressions in one year, he likewise knew of his obedience through many; nor feared that he would strive to the utmost to shelter his mother in the storm. Robert writes, “On the 13th current (Feb., 1784) I lost the best of fathers. Though to be sure, we have had long warning of the impending stroke, still the feelings of nature

claim their part ; and I cannot recollect the tender endearments and parental lessons of the best of friends, and the ablest of instructors, without feeling what perhaps the calmer dictates of reason would partly condemn. I hope my father's friends in your country will not let their connection in this place die with him. For my part I shall ever with pleasure, with pride, acknowledge my connection with those who were allied, by the ties of blood and friendship, to a man whose memory I will ever honor and revere.” And now the family remove to Mossiel,

“A virtuous household but exceeding poor.”

How fared Burns during the next two years, as a peasant ? How fared he as a poet ? As a peasant, poorly and hardly—as a poet, greatly and gloriously. How fared he as a man ? *Read his confessions.* Mossiel was the coldest of all the soils on which the family had slaved and starved—starved is too strong a word—and, in spite of its ingratitude, its fields are hallowed ground. Thousands and tens of thousands have come afar to look on them ; and Wordsworth’s self has “gazed himself away” on the pathetic prospect.

“ ‘There,’ said a stripling, pointing with much pride,
Towards a low roof, with green trees half-concealed,
‘Is Mossiel farm ; and that’s the very field
Where Burns plough’d up the Daisy.’ Far and wide
A plain below stretched seaward, while, despaired
Above sea-clouds, the peaks of Arran rose ;
And, by that simple notice, the repose
Of earth, sky, sea, and air, was vivified.
Beneath the random bield of clod or stone,
Myriads of daisies have shone forth in flower
Near the lark’s nest, and in their natural hour
Have passed away ; less happy than the one
That, by the unwilling ploughshare, died to prove
The tender charm of poetry and love.”

Peasant—Poet—Man—is, indeed, an idle distinction. Burns is sitting alone in the Auld Clay-Biggin, for it has its one retired room ; and as he says, “half-mad, half-fed, half-sarkit”—all he had made by rhyme ! He is the picture of a desponding

man, steeped to the lips in poverty of his own bringing on, and with a spirit vainly divided between hard realities, and high hopes beyond his reach, resolving at last to forswear all delusive dreams, and submit to an ignoble lot. When at once, out of the gloom arises a glory, effused into form by his own genius creative according to his soul's desire, and conscious of its greatness, despite of despair. A thousand times before now had he been so disquieted and found no comfort. But the hour had come of self-revelation, and he knew that on earth his name was to live for ever.

“ All hail ! my own inspired bard !
In me thy native muse regard !
Nor longer mourn thy fate is hard,
 Thus poorly low !
I come to give thee such reward
 As we bestow.

“ Know, the great genius of this land
Has many a light, aerial band,
Who, all beneath his high command,
 Harmoniously,
As arts or arms they understand,
 Their labors ply.

* * * * *

“ Of these am I—Coila my name ;
And this district as mine I claim,
Where once the Campbells, chief of fame,
 Held ruling power :
I mark'd thy embryo tuneful flame,
 Thy natal hour.

“ With future hope, I oft would gaze
Fond, on thy little early ways,
Thy rudely caroll'd chiming phrase,
 In uncouth rhymes,
Fir'd at the simple, artless lays
 Of other times.

“ I saw thee seek the sounding shore,
Delighted with the dashing roar ;
Or when the north his fleecy store
 Drove through the sky,

I saw grim nature's visage hoar
 Struck thy young eye.

“ Or, when the deep green-mantl'd earth
 Warm cherish'd every flow'ret's birth,
 And joy and music pouring forth
 In ev'ry grove,
 I saw thee eye the gen'ral mirth
 With boundless love.

“ When ripen'd fields, and azure skies,
 Call'd forth the reaper's rustling noise,
 I saw thee leave their evening joys,
 And lonely stalk,
 To vent thy bosom's swelling rise
 In pensive walk.

“ When youthful love, warm-blushing strong,
 Keen-shivering shot thy nerves along,
 Those accents, grateful to thy tongue
 Th' adored *Name*,
 I taught thee how to pour in song,
 To soothe thy flame.

“ I saw thy pulse's maddening play,
 Wild send thee pleasure's devious way,
 Misled by fancy's meteor ray,
 By passion driven ;
 But yet the light that led astray
 Was light from heaven.

* * * *

“ To give my counsels all in one
 Thy tuneful flame still careful fan ;
 Preserve the dignity of man,
 With soul erect :
 And trust the Universal Plan
 Will all protect.

“ *And wear thou this*—she solemn said,
 And bound the Holly round my head :
 The polish'd leaves, and berries red,
 Did rustling play ;
 And, like a passing thought, she fled
 In light away.”

"To reconcile to our imagination the entrance of an aerial being into a mansion of this kind," says the excellent Currie, "required the powers of Burns ; he, however, succeeds." Burns cared not at that time for our imagination—not he, indeed—not a straw ; nor did he so much as know of our existence. He knew that there was a human race ; and he believed that he was born to be a great power among them, especially all over his beloved and beloving Scotland. "All hail ! my own inspired bard !" That "all hail !" he dared to hear from supernatural lips, but not till his spirit had long been gazing, and long been listening to one commissioned by the "genius of the land," to stand a Vision before her chosen poet in his hut. Reconcile her entrance to our imagination ! Into no other mansion but that "Auld Clay Biggin," would Coila have descended from the sky.

The critic continues, "To the painting on her mantle, on which is depicted the most striking scenery, as well as the most distinguished characters of his native country, some exception may be made. The mantle of Coila, like the cup of Thyrsis (see the first Idyllium of Theocritus), and the shield of Achilles, is too much crowded with figures, and some of the objects represented upon it are scarcely admissible according to the principles of design."

We advise you not to see the first Idyllium of Theocritus. Perhaps you have no Greek. Mr. Chapman's translation is as good as a translation can well be, but then you may not have a copy of it at hand. A pretty wooden cup it is, with curled ears and ivy-twined lips—embossed thereon the figure of a woman with flowing robes and a Lydian head-dress, to whom two angry men are making love. Hard by, a stout old fisherman on a rock is in the act of throwing his net into the sea : not far from him is a vineyard, where a boy is sitting below a hedge framing a locust trap with stalks of asphodel, and guarding the grapes from a couple of sly foxes. Thyrsis, we are told by Theocritus, bought it from a Calydonian Skipper for a big cheese-cake and a goat. We must not meddle with the shield of Achilles.

Turn we then to the "Vision" of Burns, our Scottish Theocritus, as we have heard him classically called, and judge of Dr. Currie's sense in telling us to see the cup of Thyrsis.

“ Down flow’d her robe, a tartan sheen ;
 Till half her leg was scrimply seen ;
 And such a leg ! my bonnie Jean
 Could only peer it ;
 Sae straught, sae taper, tight, and clean,
 Nane else could near it.”

You observe Burns knew not yet who stood before him—woman, or angel, or fairy—but the Vision reminded him of her whom best he loved.

“ Green, slender, leaf-clad *holly-boughs*
 Were twisted gracefu’ round her brows ;
 I took her for *some Scottish Muse*,
 By that same token.”

Some Scottish Muse—but which of them he had not leisure to conjecture, so lost was he in admiration of that mystic robe—“that mantle large, of greenish hue.” As he continued to gaze on her, his imagination beheld whatever it chose to behold. The region dearest to the Poet’s heart is all emblazoned there—and there too its sages and its heroes.

“ Here, rivers in the sea were lost ;
 There, mountains to the skies were tost :
 Here, tumbling billows mark’d the coast,
 With surging foam :
 There, distant shone Art’s lofty boast,
 The lordly dome.

“ Here, Doon pour’d down his far-fetch’d floods ;
 There, well-fed Irvine stately thuds :
 Auld hermit Ayr staw thro’ his woods,
 On to the shore ;
 And many a lesser torrent scuds,
 With seeming roar.

“ Low, in a sandy valley spread,
 An ancient borough rear’d her head ;
 Still, as in Scottish story read,
 She boasts a race,
 To ev’ry nobler virtue bred,
 And polish’d grace

“ By stately tow'r or palace fair,
 Or ruins pendent in the air,
 Bold stems of heroes, here and there,
I could discern ;
 Some seemed to muse, some seem'd to dare,
 With feature stern.

“ My heart did glowing transport feel,
 To see a race heroic wheel,
 And brandish round the deep-dyed steel
In sturdy blows ;
 While back recoiling seem'd to reel
 Their suthorn foes.

“ His Country's Saviour, mark him well !
 Bold Richardton's heroic swell :
 The chief on Sark who glorious fell,
In high command ;
 And *he* whom ruthless fates expel
 His native land.

“ There, where a scepter'd Pictish shade,
 Stalk'd round his ashes lowly laid,
 I mark'd a martial race, portray'd
In colors strong ;
 Bold, soldier-featur'd, undismayed
 They strode along.”

What have become of “the laws of design?” But would good Dr. Currie have dried up the sea! How many yards, will anybody tell us, were in that green mantle? And what a pattern! Thomas Campbell knew better what liberty is allowed by nature to Imagination in her inspired dreams. In his noble Stanzas to the memory of Burns, he says, in allusion to “The Vision,”

“ Him, in his clay-built cot the Muse
 Entranced, and showed him all the forms
 Of fairy light and wizard gloom,
 That only gifted poet views,—
 The genii of the floods and storms,
 And martial shades from glory's tomb.”

The *Fata Morgana* are obedient to the laws of perspective,

and of optics in general ; but they belong to the material elements of nature ; this is a spiritual creation, and Burns is its maker. It is far from perfect, either in design or execution ; but perfection is found nowhere here below, except in Shakespeare ; and, if the Vision offend you, we fear your happiness will not be all you could desire it even in the Tempest or the Midsummer's Night's Dream.

How full of fine poetry are one and all of his Epistles to his friends Sillar, Lapraik, Simpson, Smith,—worthy men one and all, and among them much mother-wit almost as good as genius, and thought to be genius by Burns, who in the generous enthusiasm of his nature exaggerated the mental gifts of everybody he loved, and conceived their characters to be “accordant to his soul's desire.” His “Epistle to Davie” was among the very earliest of his productions, and Gilbert's favorable opinion of it suggested to him the first idea of becoming an author. “It was, I think, in summer 1784, when in the interval of hard labor, he and I were reading in the garden (kail-yard), that he repeated to me the principal parts of this Epistle.” It breathes a noble spirit of independence, and of proud contentment dallying with the hardships of its lot, and in the power of manhood regarding the riches that are out of its reach, without a particle of envy, and with a haughty scorn. True he says, “I hanker and canker to see their cursed pride ;” but he immediately bursts out into a strain that gives the lie to his own words :

“ What tho', like commoners of air,
We wander out, we know not where,
 But either house or hall ?
Yet nature's charms, the hills and woods,
The sweeping vales, and foaming floods,
 Are free alike to all.
In days when daisies deck the ground,
 And blackbirds whistle clear,
With honest joy our hearts will bound,
 To see the coming year :
On braes when we please, then,
 We'll sit an' sowth a tune ;
Syne rhyme till't, wee'l time till't,
 And sing't when we hae done.

“ It’s no in titles nor in rank ;
 It’s no in wealth like Lon’on bank,
 To purchase peace and rest ;
 It’s no in makin’ muckle mair ;
 It’s no in books, it’s no in lear,
 To make us truly blest ;
 If happiness hae not her seat
 And centre in the breast,
 We may be wise, or rich, or great,
 But never can be blest ;
 Nae treasures, nor pleasures,
 Could make us happy lang ;
 The heart ay’s the part ay,
 That makes us right or wrang.”

Through all these Epistles we hear him exulting in the consciousness of his own genius, and pouring out his anticipations in verses so full of force and fire, that of themselves they privilege him to declare himself a Poet after Scotland’s own heart. Not even in “The Vision” does he kindle into brighter transports, when foreseeing his fame, and describing the fields of its glory, than in his Epistle to the schoolmaster of Ochiltree; for all his life he associated with schoolmasters—finding along with knowledge, talent, and integrity, originality and strength of character prevalent in that meritorious and ill-rewarded class of men. What can be finer than this ?

“ We’ll sing auld Coila’s plains an’ fells,
 Her moors red-brown wi’ heather bells,
 Her banks an’ braes, her dens and dells,
 Where glorious Wallace
 Aft bare the gree, as story tells,
 Frae southern billies.

“ At Wallace’ name what Scottish blood
 But boils up in a spring-tide flood !
 Oft have our fearless fathers strode
 By Wallace’ side,
 Still pressing onward, red-wat-shod,
 Or glorious dy’d.

“ O, sweet are Coila’s haughs an’ woods,
 When lintwhites chaunt amang the buds,

And jinkin hares, in amorous whids,
 Their loves enjoy,
 While thro' the braes the cushat croods
 With wailful cry !

“ Ev'n winter bleak has charms for me
 When winds rave thro' the naked tree ;
 Or frosts on hills of Ochiltree
 Are hoary grey ;
 Or blinding drifts wild-furious flee,
 Dark'ning the day.

“ O Nature ! a' thy shows an' forms
 To feeling, pensive hearts hae charms !
 Whether the simmer kindly warms
 Wi' life an' light,
 Or winter howls, in gusty storms,
 The lang, dark night !

“ The Muse, nae poet ever fand her,
 Till by himsel' he learn'd to wander,
 Adown some trotting burn's meander,
 An' no think lang ;
 Or sweet to stray, an' pensive ponder
 A heart-felt sang !”

It has been thoughtlessly said that Burns had no very deep love of nature, and that he has shown no very great power as a descriptive poet. The few lines quoted suffice to set aside that assertion ; but it is true that his love of nature was always linked with some vehement passion or some sweet affection for living creatures, and that, it was for the sake of the humanity she cherishes in her bosom, that she was dear to him as his own life-blood. His love of nature by being thus restricted was the more intense. Yet there are not wanting passages that show how exquisite was his perception of her beauties even when unassociated with any definite emotion, and inspiring only that pleasure which we imbibe through the senses into our unthinking souls.

“ Whyles owre a linn the burnie plays,
 As through the glen it wimpl't ;
 Whyles round a rocky scar it strays ;
 Whyles in a wiel it dimpl't ;

Whyles glittered to the nightly rays,
 Wi' bickering, dancing dazzle;
 Whyles cookit underneath the braes,
 Below the spreading hazel,
 Unseen that night."

Such pretty passages of pure description are rare, and the charm of this one depends on its sudden sweet intrusion into the very midst of a scene of noisy merriment. But there are many passages in which the descriptive power is put forth under the influence of emotion so gentle that they come within that kind of composition in which it has been thought Burns does not excel. As for example,

" Nae mair the flower on field or meadow springs ;
 Nae mair the grove with airy concert rings,
 Except perhaps the Robin's whistling glee,
 Proud o' the height o' some bit half-lang tree ;
 The hoary morns precede the sunny days,
 Mild, calm, serene, wide spreads the noon-tide blaze,
 While thick the gossamour waves wanton in the rays."

Seldom setting himself to describe visual objects, but when he is under strong emotion, he seems to have taken considerable pains when he did, to produce something striking ; and though he never fails on such occasions to do so, yet he is sometimes ambitious overmuch, and, though never feeble, becomes bombastic, as in his lines on the Fall of Fyers :

" And viewless echo's ear astonished rends."

In the "Brigs of Ayr" there is one beautiful, and one magnificent passage of this kind.

" All before their sight,
 A fairy train appear'd in order bright :
 Adown the glittering stream they feately danc'd ;
 Bright to the moon their various dresses glanc'd :
 They footed o'er the wat'ry glass so neat,
 The infant ice scarce bent beneath their feet :
 While arts of Minstrelsy among them rung,
 And soul-ennobling Bards heroic ditties sung."

He then breaks off in celebration of “ M’Lauchlan, thairm-inspiring sage,” that is, “ a well-known performer of Scottish music on the violin,” and returns, at his leisure, to the fairies !

The other passage which we have called magnificent is a description of a spate. But in it, it is true, he personates the Auld Brig, and is inspired by wrath and contempt of the New.

“ Conceited gowk ! puff’d up wi’ windy pride !
 This monie a year I’ve stood the flood an’ tide ;
 And tho’ wi’ crazy eild I’m sair forsfairn,
 I’ll be a Brig, when ye’re as hapeless cairn !
 As yet ye little ken about the matter,
 But twa-three winters will inform you better,
 When heavy, dark, continued, a’-day rains,
 Wi’ deepening deluges o’erflow the plains ;
 When from the hills where springs the brawling Coil,
 Or stately Lugar’s mossy fountains boil,
 Or where the Greenock winds his moorland course,
 Or haunted Garpal draws his feeble source,
 Arous’d by blust’ring winds an’ spotting thowes,
 In mony a torrent down his sna-broo rowes ;
 While crashing ice, borne on the roaring speat,
 Sweeps dams, an’ mills, an’ brigs, a’ to the gate ;
 And from Glenbuck, down to the Ratten-key,
 Auld Ayr is just one lengthen’d, tumbling sea ;
 Then down ye’ll hurl, deil nor ye never rise !
 And dash the gumlie jaups up to the pouring skies.”

Perhaps we have dwelt too long on this point ; but the truth is that Burns would have utterly despised most of what is now dignified with the name of poetry, where harmlessly enough

“ Pure description takes the place of sense ; ”

but far worse, where the agonizing artist intensifies himself into genuine convulsions at the shrine of nature, or acts the epileptic to extort alms. The world is beginning to lose patience with such idolators, and insists on being allowed to see the sun set with her own eyes, and with her own ears to hear the sea. Why, there is often more poetry in five lines of Burns than any fifty volumes of the versifiers who have had the audacity to criticise him—as by way of specimen—

“When biting Boreas, fell and doure,
Sharp shivers thro’ the leafless bow’r;
When Phœbus gies a short-liv’d glow’r
Far south the lift,
Dim-dark’ning thro’ the flaky show’r
Or whirling drift:

“Ae night the storm the steeples rock’d,
Poor labor sweet in sleep was lock’d,
While burns, wi’ snawy wreaths up-chock’d,
Wild-eddying swirl,
Or thro’ the mining outlet bock’d,
Down headlong hurl.”

“Halloween” is now almost an obsolete word—and the liveliest of all festivals, that used to usher in the winter with one long night of mirthful mockery of superstitious fancies, not unattended with stirrings of imaginative fears in many a simple breast, is gone with many other customs of the good old time, not among town-folks only, but dwellers in rural parishes far withdrawn from the hum of crowds, where all such rites originate and latest fall into desuetude. The present wise generation of youngsters can care little or nothing about a poem which used to drive their grandfathers and grandmothers half-mad with merriment when boys and girls, gathered in a circle round some choice reciter, who, though perhaps endowed with no great memory for grammar, had half of Burns by heart. Many of them, doubtless, are of opinion that it is a silly affair. So must think the more aged march-of-mind men who have outgrown the whims and follies of their ill-educated youth, and become instructors in all manner of wisdom. In practice extinct to elderly people it survives in poetry; and there the body of the harmless superstition, in its very form and pressure, is embalmed. “Halloween” was thought, surely you all know *that*, to be a night “when witches, devils, and other mischief-making beings, are all abroad on their baneful midnight errands; particularly those aerial people, the fairies, are said on that night to hold a grand anniversary.” So writes Burns in a note; but in the poem evil spirits are disarmed of all their terrors, and fear is fun. It might have begun well enough, and nobody would have found fault, with

“ Some merry, friendly, kintra folks,
 Together did convene,
 To burn their nits, an’ pou their stocks,
 An’ haud their Halloween
 Fu’ blythe this night; ”

but Burns, by a few beautiful introductory lines, brings the festival at once within the world of poetry.

“ Upon that night, when fairies light,
 On Cassilis Downans dance,
 Or owre the lays, in splendid blaze,
 On sprightly coursers prance ;
 Or for Colean the route is ta’en.
 Beneath the moon’s pale beams ;
 There, up the cove, to stray an’ rove
 Amang the rocks and streams
 To sport that night.

“ Amang the bonnie winding banks,
 Where Doon rins, wimpling clear,
 Where Bruce ance rul’d the martial ranks
 And shook his Carrick spear.”

Then instantly he collects the company—the business of the evening is set a-going—each stanza has its new actor and its new charm—the transitions are as quick as it is in the power of winged words to fly ; female characters of all ages and dispositions, from the auld guid-wife “ wha fust her pipe wi’ sic a lunt,” to wee Jenny “ wi’ her little skelpie limmer’s face ”—Jean, Nell, Merran, Meg, maidens all—and “ wanton widow Leezie ”—figure each in her own individuality animated into full life, by a few touches. Nor less various the males, from hav’rel Will to “ auld uncle John wha wedlock’s joys sin’ Mar’s year did desire ”—Rab and Jock, and “ fechtin Jamie Fleck ” like all bullies “ cooard afore bogles ; ” the only pause in their fast-following proceedings being caused by garrulous grannie’s pious reproof of Jenny for daurin to try sic sportin “ as eat the apple at the glass ”—a reproof proving that her own wrinkled breast holds many queer memories of lang-syne Halloweens ;—all the carking cares of the work-day world are clean forgotten ; the hopes, fears and wishes that most agitate every human breast,

and are by the simplest concealed, here exhibit themselves without disguise in the freedom not only permitted but inspired by the passion that rules the night—"the passion," says the poet himself, "of prying into futurity, which makes a striking part of the history of human nature in its rude state, in all ages and nations; and it may be some entertainment to a philosophic mind, if any such should honor the author with a perusal, to see the remains of it, among the more unenlightened of our own."

But how have we been able to refrain from saying a few words about the Cottar's Saturday Night? How affecting Gilbert's account of its origin!

"Robert had frequently remarked to me that he thought there was something peculiarly venerable in the phrase, 'Let us worship God,' used by a decent sober head of a family introducing family worship. To this sentiment of the author the world is indebted for the Cottar's Saturday Night. The hint of the plan, and title of the poem, were taken from Ferguson's *Farmer's Ingle*. When Robert had not some pleasure in view in which I was not thought fit to participate, we used frequently to walk together, when the weather was favorable, on the Sunday afternoons (those precious breathing-times to the laboring part of the community) and enjoyed such Sundays as would make me regret to see their number abridged. It was on one of those walks that I first had the pleasure of hearing the author repeat the *Cottar's Saturday Night*. I do not recollect to have read or heard anything by which I was more *highly electrified*." No wonder Gilbert was highly electrified; for though he had read or heard many things of his brother Robert's of equal poetical power, not one among them all was so charged with those sacred influences that connect the human heart with heaven. It must have sounded like a very revelation of all the holiness for ever abiding in that familiar observance, but which custom, without impairing its efficacy, must often partially hide from the children of labor when it is all the time helping to sustain them upon and above this earth. And this from the erring to the steadfast brother! From the troubled to the quiet spirit! out of a heart too often steeped in the waters of bitterness, issuing, as from an unpolluted fountain, the inspiration of pious

song ! But its effects on innumerable hearts is not now *electrical*—it inspires peace. It is felt yet, and sadly changed will then be Scotland, if ever it be not felt, by every one who peruses it, to be a communication from brother to brother. It is felt by us, all through from beginning to end, to be BURNS's *Cottar's Saturday Night* ; at each succeeding sweet or solemn stanza we more and more love the man—at its close we bless him as a benefactor ; and if, as the picture fades, thoughts of sin and of sorrow will arise, and will not be put down, let them, as we hope for mercy, be of our own—not his ; let us tremble for ourselves as we hear a voice saying, “Fear God and keep his commandments.”

There are few more *perfect* poems. It is the utterance of a heart whose chords were all tuned to gratitude, “making sweet melody” to the Giver, on a night not less sacred in His eye than His own appointed Sabbath.

“ November chill blows loud wi’ angry sugh ;
 The short’ning winter day is near a close ;
 The miry beasts retreating frae the pleugh ;
 The black’ning trains o’ crows to their repose ;
 The toil worn *Cottar* frae his labor goes,
This night his weekly moil is at an end,
 Collects his spades, his mattocks, and his hoes,
 Hoping the *morn* in ease and rest to spend,
 And weary, o’er the moor, his course does ha’ward bend.”

That one single stanza is in itself a picture, one may say a poem, of the poor man’s life. It is so imagined on the eye that we absolutely see it ; but then not an epithet but shows the condition on which he holds, and the heart with which he endures, and enjoys it. Work he must in the face of November ; but God who made the year shortens and lengthens its days for the sake of his living creatures, and has appointed for them all their hour of rest. The “miry beasts” will soon be at supper in their clean-strawed stalls—“the black’ning train o’ crows” invisibly hushed on their rocking trees ; and he whom God made after his own image, that “toil-worn Cottar,” he too may lie down and sleep. There is nothing especial in his lot wherefore he should be pitied, nor are we asked to pity him, as he “col-

lects his spades, his mattocks, and his hoes ;” many of us, who have work to do and do it not, may envy his contentment, and the religion that gladdens his release—“ hoping the morn in ease and rest to spend,” only to such as he, in truth, a Sabbath. “ Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day. Six days shalt thou labor and do all that thou hast to do. But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God. In it thou shalt do no manner of work !” O ! that man should ever find it in his heart to see in that law a stern obligation—not a merciful boon and a blessed privilege !

In those times family worship in such dwellings, all over Scotland, was not confined to one week-day. It is to be believed that William Burnes might have been heard by his son Robert duly every night saying, “ Let us worship God.” “ There was something peculiarly venerable in the phrase ” every time he heard it ; but on “ Saturday night ” family worship was surrounded, in its solemnity, with a gathering of whatever is most cheerful and unalloyed in the lot of labor ; and the poet’s genius in a happy hour hearing those words in his heart, collected many nights into one, and made the whole observance, as it were, a religious establishment, it is to be hoped, for ever.

“ The fifth and sixth stanzas, and the eighteenth,” says Gilbert, “ thrilled with peculiar ecstasy through my soul ;” and well they might ; for, in homeliest words, they tell at once of home’s familiar doings and of the highest thoughts that can ascend in supplication to the throne of God. What is the eighteenth stanza, and why did it too “ thrill with peculiar ecstasy my soul ?” You may be sure that whatever thrilled Gilbert’s soul will thrill yours if it be in holy keeping ; for he was a good man, and walked all his days fearing God.

“ Then homeward all take off their sev’ral way ;
The youngling cottagers retire to rest ;
The parent-pair their secret homage pay,
And proffer up to Heaven the warm request
That He who stills the raven’s clam’rous nest,
And decks the lily fair in flow’ry pride,
Would, in the way his wisdom sees the best,
For them and for their little ones provide :
But chiefly, in their hearts with grace divine preside.”

Think again of the first stanza of all—for you have forgotten it—of the toil-worn Cottar collecting his spades, his mattocks, and his hoes, and weary o'er the moor bending his course home-wards. In spite of his hope of *the morn*, you could hardly help looking on him *then* as if he were disconsolate—*now* you are prepared to believe, with the poet, that such brethren are among the best of their country's sons, that

“ From scenes like these old Scotia's grandeur springs,
That makes her lov'd at home, rever'd abroad ; ”

and you desire to join in the Invocation that bursts from his pious and patriotic heart :

“ O *Scotia* ! my dear, my native soil !
For whom my warmest wish to Heaven is sent !
Long may thy hardy sons of rustic toil,
Be bless'd with health, and peace, and sweet content !
And O ! may Heaven their simple lives prevent
From luxury's contagion, weak and vile !
Then, howe'er *crowns* and *coronets* be rent,
A *virtuous populace* may rise the while,
And stand a wall of fire around their much lov'd *Isle*.

“ O Thou ! who pour'd the patriotic tide
That stream'd through Wallace's undaunted heart ;
Who dared to nobly stem tyrannic pride,
Or nobly die, the second glorious part,
(The patriot's God, peculiarly thou art,
His friend, inspirer, guardian, and reward !)
O never, never, Scotia's realm desert :
But still the patriot, and the patriot bard,
In bright succession raise, her ornament and guard ! ”

We said there are few more perfect poems. The expression is hardly a correct one ; but in two of the stanzas there are lines which we never read without wishing them away, and there is one stanza we could sometimes almost wish away altogether ; the sentiment, though beautifully worded, being somewhat harsh, and such as must be felt to be unjust by many devout and pious people :

“ They chant their artless notes in simple guise ;
 They tune their hearts, by far the noblest aim :
 Perhaps Dundee’s wild warbling measures rise,
 Or plaintive Martyrs, worthy of the name ;
 Or noble Elgin beats the heaven-ward flame,
 The sweetest far of Scotia’s holy lays :
Compared with these Italian trills are tame ;
The tickl’d ears no heart-felt raptures raise ;
Nae unison hae they with our Creator’s praise.”

We do not find fault with Burns for having written these lines : for association of feeling with feeling, by contrast, is perhaps most of all powerful in music. Believing that there was no devotional spirit in Italian music, it was natural for him to denounce its employment in religious services ; but we all know that it cannot without most ignorant violation of truth be said of the hymns of that most musical of all people, and superstitious as they may be, among the most devout, that

“ Nae unison hae they with our Creator’s praise.”

Our objection to some lines in another stanza is more serious, for it applies not to a feeling but a judgment. That there is more virtue in a cottage than in a palace we are not disposed to deny at any time, least of all when reading the Cottar’s Saturday Night : and we entirely go along with Burns when he says,

“ And certes, in fair virtue’s heavenly road,
 The cottage leaves the palace far behind ;”

but there, we think, he ought to have stopped, or illustrated the truth in a milder manner than

“ What is a lordling’s pomp ? a cumbrous load,
 Disguising oft the wretch of human kind,
 Studied in arts of hell, in wickedness refined.”

Our moral nature revolts with a sense of injustice from the comparison of the wickedness of one class with the goodness of another ; and the effect is the very opposite of that intended, the rising up of a miserable conviction that for a while had been

laid asleep, that vice and crime are not excluded from cots, but often, alas! are found there in their darkest colors and most portentous forms.

The whole stanza we had in our mind as somehow or other not entirely delightful, is

“Compared with this, how poor Religion’s pride,
In all the pomp of method, and of art,
When men display to congregations wide,
Devotion’s every grace except the heart.
The Pow’r, incens’d, the pageant will desert,
The pompous strain, the sacerdotal stole ;
But haply, in some cottage far apart,
May hear, well pleased, the language of the soul ;
And in his book of life the inmates poor enrol.”

“Let us join in the worship of God” is a strong desire of nature, and a commanded duty ; and thus are brought together, for praise and prayer, “congregations wide,” in all populous places of every Christian land. Superstition is sustained by the same sympathy as religion—enlightenment of reason being essential to faith. There sit, every Sabbath, hundreds of hypocrites, thousands of the sincere, tens of thousands of the indifferent—how many of the devout or how few who shall say that understands the meaning of *devotion*? If *all* be false and hollow, a mere semblance only, then indeed

“The Pow’r incens’d, the pageant will desert,
The pompous strain, the sacerdotal stole ;”

but if, even in the midst of “religion’s pride,” there be humble and contrite hearts—if a place be found for the poor in spirit even “in gay religions full of pomp and gold”—a Christian poet ought to guard his heart against scorn of the ritual of any form of Christian worship. Be it performed in Cathedral, Kirk, or Cottage—God regards it only when performed in spirit and in truth.

Remember all this poetry, and a hundred almost as fine things besides, was composed within little more than two years, by a man all the while working for wages—seven pounds from May-day to May-day ; and that he never idled at his work, but mowed

and ploughed as if working by the piece, and could afford therefore, God bless his heart, to stay the share for a minute, but too late for the “wee, sleekit, cowrin, timorous beastie’s” nest. Folks have said he was a bad farmer, and neglected Mossiel, an idler in the land.

“ How various his employments whom the world
Calls idle ! ”

Absent in the body, we doubt not, he frequently was from his fields ; oftenest in the evenings and at night. Was he in Nance Tinnock’s ? She knew him by name and head-mark, for once seen he was not to be forgotten ; but she complained that he had never drunk three half-mutchkins in her house, whatever he might say in his lying poems. In Poussie Nannie’s—mother of Racer Jess ?—He was there *once* ; and out of the scum and refuse of the outcasts of the lowest grade of possible being, he constructed a Beggar’s Opera, in which the singers and dancers, drabs and drunkards all, belong still to humanity ; and though huddling together in the filth of the flesh, must not be classed, in their enjoyments, with the beasts that perish. In the Smiddy ? Ay, you might have found him there, at times when he had no horse to be shoed, no coulter to be sharpened.

“ When Vulcan gies his bellows breath,
An’ ploughmen gather wi’ their graith,
O rare ! to see thee fizz an’ freath
I’ th’ luggit caup !
Then *Burnewin* comes on like death
At every chaup.

“ Nae mercy, then, for airn or steel ;
The brawnie, bainie, ploughman cheel,
Brings hand owrehip, wi’ sturdy wheel,
The strong forehammer,
Till block an’ studdie ring an’ reel
Wi’ dinsome clamor.”

On frozen Muir-loch ? Among the curlers “ a^t their *roaring play* ”—roaring is the right word—but ‘tis not the bonspiel only that roars, it is the ice, and echo tells it is from her crags that submit not to the snow. There king of his rink was Rabbie

Burns to be found ; and at night in the Hostelry, in the reek of beef and greens and "Scotch drink," Apollo in the shape of a ploughman at the head of the fir-table that dances with all its glasses to the horny fists clenching with cordial thumpers the sallies of wit and humor volleying from his lips and eyes, unreproved by the hale old minister who is happy to meet his parishioners out of the pulpit, and by his presence keeps the poet within bounds, if not of absolute decorum, of that decency becoming men in their most jovial mirth, and not to be violated without reproach by genius in its most wanton mood dallying even with forbidden things. Or at a Rockin' ? An evening meeting, as you know, "*one* of the objects of which," so says the glossary, "is spinning with the rock or distaff;" but which has many other objects, as the dullest may conjecture, when lads and lasses have come flocking from "behind the hills where Stinchar flows, mang muirs and mosses many o'," to one solitary homestead made roomy enough for them all ; and if now and then felt to be too close and crowded for the elderly people and the old, not unprovided with secret spots near at hand in the broom and the brackens, where the sleeping lintwhites sit undisturbed by lovers' whispers, and lovers may look, if they choose it, unashamed to the stars.

And what was he going to do with all this poetry—poetry accumulating fast as his hand, released at night from other implements, could put it on paper, in bold, round, upright characters, that tell of fingers more familiar with the plough than the pen ? He himself sometimes must have wondered to find every receptacle in the spence crammed with manuscripts, to say nothing of the many others floating about all over the country, and setting the smiddies in a roar, and not a few, of which nothing was said, folded in the breast-kerchiefs of maidens, put therein by his own hand on the lea-rig, beneath the milk-white thorn. What brought him out into the face of day as a Poet ?

Of all the women Burns ever loved, Mary Campbell not excepted, the dearest to him by far, from first to last, was Jean Armour. During composition her image rises up from his heart before his eyes the instant he touches on any thought or feeling with which she could be in any way connected ; and sometimes

his allusions to her might even seem out of place, did they not please us, by letting us know that he could not altogether forget her, whatever the subject his muse had chosen. Others may have inspired more poetical strains, but there is an earnestness in his fervors, at her name, that brings her breathing in warm flesh and blood to his breast. Highland Mary he would have made his wife, and perhaps broken her heart. He loved her living, as a creature in a dream, dead as a spirit in heaven. But Jean Armour possessed his heart in the stormiest season of his passions, and she possessed it in the lull that preceded their dissolution. She was well worthy of his affection, on account of her excellent qualities ; and though never beautiful, had many personal attractions. But Burns felt himself bound to her by that inscrutable mystery in the soul of every man, by which one other being, and one only, is believed, and truly, to be essential to his happiness here,—without whom, life is not life. Her strict and stern father, enraged out of all religion, both natural and revealed, with his daughter for having sinned with a man of sin, tore from her hands her *marriage lines* as she besought forgiveness on her knees, and without pity for the life stirring within her, terrified her into the surrender and renunciation of the title of wife, branding her thereby with an abhorred name. A father's power is sometimes very terrible, and it was so here ; for she submitted, with less outward show of agony than can be well understood, and Burns almost became a madman. His worldly circumstances were wholly desperate, for bad seasons had stricken dead the cold soil of Mossiel ; but he was willing to work for his wife in ditches, or to support her for a while at home, by his wages as a negro-driver in the West Indies.

A more unintelligible passage than this never occurred in the life of any other man, certainly never a more trying one ; and Burns must at this time have been tormented by as many violent passions, in instant succession or altogether, as the human heart could hold. In verse he had for years given vent to all his moods ; and his brother tells us that the LAMENT was composed “after the first distraction of his feelings had a little subsided.” Had he lost her by death he would have been dumb, but his

grief was not mortal, and it grew eloquent, when relieved and sustained from prostration by other passions that lift up the head, if it be only to let it sink down again, rage, pride, indignation, jealousy, and scorn. “Never man loved, or rather adored woman more than I did her ; and to confess a truth between you and me, I do still love her to distraction after all. My poor dear unfortunate Jean ! It is not the losing her that makes me so unhappy ; but for her sake I feel most severely ; I grieve she is in the road to, I fear, eternal ruin. May Almighty God forgive her ingratitude and perjury to me, as I from my very soul forgive her ; and may his grace be with her, and bless her in all her future life ! I can have no nearer idea of the place of eternal punishment than what I have felt in my own breast on her account. I have tried often to forget her ; I have run into all kinds of dissipation and riot, mason-meetings, drinking matches, and other mischiefs, to drive her out of my head, but all in vain. And now for the grand cure : the ship is on her way home, that is to take me out to Jamaica ; and then farewell, dear old Scotland ! and farewell, dear ungrateful Jean ! for never, never will I see you more.” In the LAMENT, there are the same passions, but genius has ennobled them by the tenderness and elevation of the finest poetry, guided their transitions by her solemnizing power, inspired their appeals to conscious night and nature, and subdued down to the beautiful and pathetic, the expression of what had else been agony and despair.

Twenty pounds would enable him to leave Scotland, and take him to Jamaica ; and to raise them, it occurred to Robert Burns to publish his poems by subscription ! “I was pretty confident my poems would meet with some applause ; but at the worst, the roar of the Atlantic would deafen the voice of censure, and the novelty of West Indian scenes make me forget neglect. I threw off six hundred copies, of which I got subscriptions for about three hundred and sixty. My vanity was highly gratified by the reception I met with from the public ; and besides, I pocketed, all expenses deducted, near twenty pounds. This sum came very seasonably, as I was thinking of indenturing myself for want of money to procure my passage. As

soon as I was master of nine guineas, the price of wafting me to the torrid zone, I took a steerage passage in the first ship that was to sail for the Clyde, ‘For hungry ruin had me in the wind.’” The ship sailed ; but Burns was still at Mossiel, for his strong heart could not tear itself away from Scotland, and some of his friends encouraged him to hope that he might be made a gauger ! In a few months he was about to be hailed, by the universal acclamation of his country, a great National Poet.

But the enjoyment of his fame all round his birth-place, “the heart and the main region of his song,” intense as we know it was, though it assuaged, could not still the troubles of his heart ; his life amidst it all was as hopeless as when it was obscure ; “his chest was on its road to Greenock, where he was to embark in a few days for America,” and again he sung

“ Farewell old Coila’s hills and dales,
Her heathy moors and winding vales,
The scenes where wretched fancy roves,
Pursuing past unhappy loves.
Farewell my friends, farewell my foes,
My peace with these, my love with those—
The bursting tears my heart declare,
Farewell the bonny banks of Ayr ;”

when a few words from a blind old man to a country clergyman kindled within him a new hope, and set his heart on fire ; and while

“ November winds blew loud wi’ angry sugh,”

“ I posted away to Edinburgh without a single acquaintance, or a single letter of introduction. The baneful star that had so long shed its blasting influence on my zenith, for once made a revolution to the Nadir.”

At first, Burns was stared at with such eyes as people open wide who behold a prodigy ; for though he looked the rustic, and his broad shoulders had the stoop that stalwart men acquire at the plough, his swarthy face was ever and anon illumined with the look that genius alone puts off and on, and that

comes and goes with a new interpretation of imagination's winged words. For a week or two he had lived chiefly with some Ayrshire acquaintances, and was not personally known to any of the leading men. But as soon as he came forward, and was seen and heard, his name went through the city, and people asked one another, "Have you met Burns?" His demeanor among the Magnates, was not only unembarrassed but dignified, and it was at once discerned by the blindest that he belonged to the aristocracy of nature. "The idea which his conversation conveyed of the power of his mind, exceeded, if possible, that which is suggested by his writings. Among the poets whom I have happened to know, I have been struck, in more than one instance, with the unaccountable disparity between their general talents, and the occasional aspirations of their more favored moments. But all the faculties of Burns's mind were, as far as I could judge, equally vigorous; and his predilections for poetry were rather the result of his own enthusiastic and impassioned temper, than of a genius exclusively adapted to that species of composition." Who those poets were, of occasional inspiration and low general talents, and in conversation felt to be of the race of the feeble, Dugald Stewart had too much delicacy to tell us; but if Edinburgh had been their haunt, and theirs the model of the poetical character in the judgment of her sages, no wonder that a new light was thrown on the Philosophy of the Human Mind by that of Robert Burns. For his intellectual faculties were of the highest order, and though deferential to superior knowledge, he spoke on all subjects he understood, and they were many, with a voice of determination, and when need was, of command. It was not in the debating club in Tarbolton alone, about which so much nonsense has been prosed, that he had learned eloquence; he had been long giving chosen and deliberate utterance to all his bright ideas and strong emotions; they were all his own, or he had made them his own by transfusion; and so, therefore, was his speech. Its fount was in genius, and therefore could not run dry—a flowing spring that needed neither to be *fanged* nor pumped. As he had the power of eloquence, so had he the will, the desire, the ambition to put it forth; for he rejoiced to carry

with him the sympathies of his kind, and in his highest moods he was not satisfied with their admiration without their love. There never beat a heart more alive to kindness. To the wise and good, how eloquent his gratitude ! to Glencairn, how imperishable ! This exceeding tenderness of heart often gave such pathos to his ordinary talk, that he even melted common-place people into tears ! Without scholarship, without science, with not much of what is called information, he charmed the first men in a society equal in all these to any at that time in Europe. The scholar was happy to forget his classic lore, as he listened, for the first time, to the noblest sentiments flowing from the lips of a rustic, sometimes in his own Doric, divested of all offensive vulgarity, but oftener in language which, in our northern capital, was thought pure English, and comparatively it was so, for in those days the speech of many of the most distinguished persons would have been unintelligible out of Scotland, and they were proud of excelling in the use of their mother tongue. The philosopher wondered that the peasant should comprehend intuitively truths that had been established, it was so thought, by reasoning demonstrative or inductive ; as the illustrious Stewart, a year or two afterwards, wondered how clear an idea Burns the Poet had of Alison's True Theory of Taste. True it is that the great law of association has by no one been so beautifully stated in a single sentence as by Burns : "That the martial clangor of a trumpet had something in it vastly more grand, heroic, and sublime than the twingle-twangle of a Jews'-harp ; that the delicate flexure of a rose-twig, when the half-blown flower is heavy with the tears of the dawn, was infinitely more beautiful and elegant than the upright stalk of the burdock ; and that from something innate and independent of all associations of ideas—these I had set down as irrefragable orthodox truths, until perusing your book shook my faith." The man of wit—aye even Harry Erskine himself—and a wittier than he never charmed social life—was nothing loth, with his delightful amenity, to cease for a while the endless series of anecdotes so admirably illustrative of the peculiarities of nations, orders, or individuals, and almost all of them created or vivified by his own genius, that the most accomplished compa-

nies might experience a new pleasure from the rich and racy humor of a natural converser fresh from the plough.

And how did Burns bear all this, and much besides even more trying? For you know that a duchess declared that she had never before in all her life met with a man who so fairly carried her off her feet. Hear Professor Stewart: "The attentions he received during his stay in town, from all ranks and descriptions of persons, were such as would have turned any head but his own. I cannot say that I could perceive any unfavorable effect which they left on his mind. He retained the same simplicity of manners and appearance which had struck me so forcibly when I first saw him in the country; nor did he seem to feel any additional self-importance from the number and rank of his new acquaintance." In many passages of his letters to friends who had their fears, Burns expressed entire confidence in his own self-respect, and in terms the most true and touching; as, for example, to Dr. Moore: "The hope to be admired for ages is, in by far the greater part of those who even were authors of repute, an unsubstantial dream. For my part, my first ambition was, and still is, to please my compeers, the rustic inmates of the hamlet, while ever-changing language and manners shall allow me to be relished and understood." And to his venerated friend Mrs. Dunlop, he gives utterance, in the midst of his triumphs, to dark forebodings, some of which were but too soon fulfilled! "You are afraid that I shall grow intoxicated with my prosperity as a poet. Alas! Madam, I know myself and the world too well. I assure you, Madam, I do not dissemble, when I tell you I tremble for the consequences. The novelty of a poet in my obscure situation, without any of those advantages which are reckoned necessary for that character, at least at this time of day, has raised a partial tide of public notice, which has borne me to a height where I am feeling absolutely certain my abilities are inadequate to support me; and too surely do I see that time, when the same tide will leave me, and recede, perhaps, as far below the mark of truth. I do not say this in ridiculous affectation of self-abasement and modesty. I have studied myself, and know what ground I occupy; and however a friend or the world may differ from me in that par-

ticular, I stand for my own opinion in silent resolve, with all the tenaciousness of property. I mention this to you once for all, to disburthen my mind, and I do not wish to hear or say more about it. But,

‘When proud fortune’s ebbing tide recedes,’

you will bear me witness, that, when my bubble of fame was at the highest, I stood, un intoxicated with the inebriating cup in my hand, looking forward with rueful resolve to the hastening time when the blow of Calumny should dash it to the ground with all the eagerness of vengeful triumph.”

Such equanimity is magnanimous ; for though it is easy to declaim on the vanity of fame, and the weakness of them who are intoxicated with its bubbles, the noblest have still longed for it, and what a fatal change it has indeed often wrought on the simplicity and sincerity of the most gifted spirits ! There must be a moral grandeur in his character who receives sedately the unexpected, though deserved ratification of his title to that genius whose empire is the inner being of his race, from the voice of his native land uttered aloud through all her regions, and harmoniously combined of innumerable tones all expressive of a great people’s pride. Make what deductions you will from the worth of that “All hail !” and still it must have sounded in Burns’s ears as a realization of that voice heard by his prophetic soul in the “VISION.”

“ ALL HAIL ! MY OWN INSPIRED BARD !
I taught thy manners-painting strains,
The loves, the ways of simple swains,
TILL NOW, O’ER ALL MY WIDE DOMAINS
THY FAME EXTENDS !”

Robert Burns was not the man to have degraded himself everlastingly, by one moment’s seeming slight or neglect of friends, new or old, belonging either to his own condition, or to a rank in life somewhat higher perhaps than his own, although not exactly to that “select society” to which the wonder awakened by his genius had given him a sudden introduction. Persons in that middle or inferior rank were his natural, his best, and his

truest friends ; and many of them, there can be no doubt, were worthy of his happiest companionship either in the festal hour or the hour of closer communion. He had no right, with all his genius, to stand aloof from them, and with a heart like his he had no inclination. Why should he have lived exclusively with lords and ladies—paper or land lords—ladies by descent or courtesy—with aristocratic advocates, philosophical professors, clergymen, wild or moderate, Arminian or Calvinistic ? Some of them were among the first men of their age ; others were doubtless not inerudite, and a few not unwitty in their own esteem ; and Burns greatly enjoyed their society, in which he met with an admiration that must have been to him the pleasure of a perpetual triumph. But more of them were dull and pompous ; incapable of rightly estimating or feeling the power of his genius ; and when the glitter and the gloss of novelty was worn off before their shallow eyes, from the poet who bore them all down into insignificance, then no doubt they began to get offended and shocked with his rusticity or rudeness, and sought refuge in the distinctions of rank, and the laws, not to be violated with impunity, of “select society.” The patronage he received was honorable, and he felt it to be so ; but it was still patronage ; and had he, for the sake of it or its givers, forgotten for a day the humblest, lowest, meanest of his friends, or even his acquaintances, how could he have borne to read his own two bold lines—

“ The rank is but the guinea stamp,
The man’s the gowd for a’ that ? ”

Besides, we know from Burns’s poetry what was then the character of the people of Scotland, for they were its materials, its staple. Her peasantry were a noble race, and their virtues moralized his song. The inhabitants of the towns were of the same family—the same blood—one kindred—and many, most of them, had been born, or in some measure bred, in the country. Their ways of thinking, feeling, and acting were much alike ; and the shopkeepers of Edinburgh and Glasgow were as proud of Robert Burns, as the ploughmen and shepherds of Kyle and the Stewartry. He saw in them friends and brothers.

Their admiration of him was, perhaps, fully more sincere and heartfelt, nor accompanied with less understanding of his merits, than that of persons in higher places; and most assuredly among the respectable citizens of Edinburgh Burns found more lasting friends than he ever did among her gentry and noblesse. Nor can we doubt, that then as now, there were in that order great numbers of men of well cultivated minds, whom Burns, in his best hours, did right to honor, and who were perfectly entitled to seek his society, and to open their hospitable doors to the brilliant stranger. That Burns, whose sympathies were keen and wide, and who never dreamt of looking down on others as beneath him, merely because he was conscious of his own vast superiority to the common run of men, should have shunned or been shy of such society, would have been something altogether unnatural and incredible; nor is it at all wonderful or blameable that he should occasionally even have much preferred such society to that which has been called "more select," and therefore above his natural and proper condition. Admirably as he in general behaved in the higher circles, in those humbler ones alone could he have felt himself completely at home. His demeanor among the rich, the great, the learned, or the wise, must often have been subject to some little restraint, and all restraint of that sort is ever painful; or, what is worse still, his talk must sometimes have partaken of display. With companions and friends, who claimed no superiority in anything, the sensitive mind of Burns must have been at its best and happiest, because completely at its ease, and free movement given to the play of all its feelings and faculties; and in such companies we cannot but believe that his wonderful conversational powers shone forth in their most various splendor. He must have given vent there to a thousand familiar fancies, in all their freedom and all their force, which, in the fastidious society of high life, his imagination must have been too much fettered even to conceive; and which, had they flowed from his lips, would either not have been understood, or would have given offence to that delicacy of breeding which is often hurt even by the best manners of those whose manners are all of nature's teaching, and unsubjected to the salutary restraints of artificial life. Indeed, we know

that Burns sometimes burst suddenly and alarmingly the restraints of “select society ;” and that on one occasion he called a clergyman an idiot for misquoting Gray’s Elegy—a truth that ought not to have been promulgated in presence of the parson, especially at so early a meal as breakfast : and he confesses in his most confidential letters, though indeed he was then writing with some bitterness, that he never had been truly and entirely happy at rich men’s feasts. If so, then never could he have displayed there his genius in full power and lustre. His noble rage must in some measure have been repressed—the genial current of his soul in some degree frozen. He never was, never could be, the free, fearless, irresistible Robert Burns that nature made him—no, not even although he carried the Duchess of Gordon off her feet, and silenced two Ex-Moderators of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.

Burns, before his visit to Edinburgh, had at all times and places been in the habit of associating with the best men of his order—the best in everything, in station, in manners, in moral and intellectual character. Such men as William Tell and Hofer, for example, associated with in Switzerland and the Tyrol. Even the persons he got unfortunately too well acquainted with (but whose company he soon shook off), at Irvine and Kirk-Oswald—smugglers and their adherents, were, though a lawless and dangerous set, men of spunk, and spirit, and power, both of mind and body ; nor was there anything the least degrading in an ardent, impassioned, and imaginative youth becoming for a time rather too much attached to such daring, and adventurous, and even interesting characters. They had all a fine strong poetical smell of the sea, mingled to precisely the proper pitch with that of the contraband. As a poet Burns must have been much the better of such temporary associates ; as a man, let us hope, notwithstanding Gilbert’s fears, not greatly the worse. The passions that boiled in his blood would have overflowed his life, often to disturb, and finally to help to destroy him, had there never been an Irvine and its sea-port. But Burns’s friends, up to the time he visited Edinburgh, had been chiefly his admirable brother, a few of the ministers round about, farmers, ploughmen, farm-servants, and workers in the

winds of heaven blowing over moors and mosses, cornfields and meadows beautiful as the blue skies themselves ; and if you call that low company, you had better fling your copy of Burns, Cottar's Saturday Night, Mary in Heaven, and all, into the fire. He, the noblest peasant that ever trod the greensward of Scotland, kept the society of other peasants, whose nature was like his own ; and then, were the silken-snooded maidens whom he wooed on lea-rig and 'mang the rigs o' barley, were they who inspired at once his love and his genius, his passion and his poetry, till the whole land of Coila overflowed with his immortal song,—so that now to the proud native's ear every stream murmurs a music not its own, given it by sweet Robin's lays, and the lark more lyrical than ever seems singing his songs at the gates of heaven for the shepherd's sake, as through his half-closed hand he eyes the musical mote in the sunshine, and remembers him who "sung her new-wakened by the daisy's side,"—were they, the blooming daughters of Scotia, we demand of you on peril of your life, low company and unworthy of Robert Burns ?

As to the charge of liking to be what is vulgarly called "cock of the company," what does that mean when brought against such a man ? In what company, pray, could not Burns, had he chosen it, and he often did choose it, have easily been the first ? No need had he to crow among dunghills. If you liken him to a bird at all, let it be the eagle, or the nightingale, or the bird of Paradise. James Montgomery has done this in some exquisite verses, which are clear in our heart, but indistinct in our memory, and therefore we cannot adorn our pages with their beauty. The truth is, that Burns, though when his heart burned within him, one of the most eloquent of men that ever set the table in a roar or a hush, was always a modest, often a silent man, and he would sit for hours together, even in company, with his broad' forehead on his hand, and his large lamping eyes sobered and tamed, in profound and melancholy thought. Then his soul would "spring upwards like a pyramid of fire," and send "illumination into dark deep holds," or brighten the brightest hour in which Feeling and Fancy ever flung their united radiance over the common ongoings of this our common-

place world and every-day life. Was this the man to desire, with low longings and base aspirations, to shine among the obscure, or rear his haughty front and giant stature among pygmies ? He who

“ walked in glory and in joy,
Following his plough upon the mountain-side ;”

he who sat in glory and in joy at the festal board, when mirth and wine did most abound, and strangers were strangers no more within the fascination of his genius, for

“ One touch of nature makes the whole world kin ;”

or at the frugal board, surrounded by his wife and children, and servants, lord and master of his own happy and industrious home—the frugal meal, preceded and followed by thanksgiving to the Power that spread his table in the barren places ?

Show us any series of works in prose or verse, in which man's being is so illustrated as to lay it bare and open for the benefit of man, and the chief pictures they contain, drawn from “select society.” There are none such ; and for this reason, that in such society there is neither power to paint them, nor materials to be painted, nor colors to lay on, till the canvas shall speak a language which all the world as it runs may read.. What would Scott have been, had he not loved and known the people ? What would his works have been, had they not shown the many-colored character of the people ? What would Shakespeare have been, had he not often turned majestically from kings, and “lords and dukes and mighty earls,” to their subjects and vassals and lowly bondsmen, and “counted the beatings of lonely hearts” in the obscure but impassioned life that stirs every nook of this earth where human beings abide ? What would Words-worth have been, had he disdained, with his high intellect and imagination, “to stoop his anointed head” beneath the wooden lintel of the poor man's door ? His Lyrical Ballads, “with all the innocent brightness of the new-born day,” had never charmed the meditative heart. His “Church-Yard among the Mountains” had never taught men how to live and how to die.

These are men who have descended from aerial heights into the humblest dwellings ; who have shown the angel's wing equally when poised near the earth, and floating over its cottaged vales, as when seen sailing on high through the clouds and azure depth of heaven, or hanging over the towers and temples of great cities. They shunned not to parley with the blind beggar by the way-side ; they knew how to transmute, by divinest alchemy, the base metal into the fine gold. Whatever company of human beings they have mingled with, they lend it colors, and did not receive its shades ; and hence their mastery over the "wide soul of the world dreaming of things to come." Burns was born, bred, lived, and died in that condition of this mortal life to which they paid but visits ; his heart lay wholly there ; and that heart, filled as it was with all the best human feelings, and sometimes with thoughts divine, had no fears about entering into places which timid moralists might have thought forbidden and unhallowed ground, but which he, wiser far, knew to be inhabited by creatures of conscience, bound there often in thick darkness by the inscrutable decrees of God.

For a year and more after the publication of the Edinburgh Edition, Burns led a somewhat roving life, till his final settlement with Creech. He had a right to enjoy himself ; and it does not appear that there was much to blame in his conduct either in town or country, though he did not live upon air nor yet upon water. There was much dissipation in those days—much hard drinking—in select as well as in general society, in the best as well as in the worst ; and he had his share of it in many circles—but never in the lowest. His associates were all honorable men, then, and in after life ; and he left the Capital in possession of the respect of its most illustrious citizens. Of his various tours and excursions there is little to be said ; the birth-places of old Scottish Songs he visited in the spirit of a religious pilgrim ; and his poetical fervor was kindled by the grandeur of the Highlands. He had said to Mrs. Dunlop, "I have no dearer aim than to have it in my power, unplagued with the routine of business, for which, heaven knows ! I am unfit enough, to make leisurely pilgrimages through Caledonia ; to sit on the fields of her battles, to wander on the romantic banks of her rivers, and

to muse by the stately towers or venerable ruins, once the honored abodes of her heroes. But these are all Utopian thoughts ; I have dallied long enough with life ; 't is time to be in earnest. I have a fond, and aged mother to care for, and some other bosom ties perhaps equally tender. Where the individual only suffers by the consequences of his own thoughtlessness, indolence, or folly, he may be excusable, nay, shining abilities, and some of the nobler virtues, may half sanctify a heedless character : but where God and nature have intrusted the welfare of others to his care, where the trust is sacred, and the ties are dear, that man must be far gone in selfishness, or strangely lost to reflection, whom these connections will not rouse to exertion."

Burns has now got liberated, for ever, from "stately Edinburgh thronged on crags," the favored abode of philosophy and fashion, law and literature, reason and refinement, and has returned again into his own natural condition, neither essentially the better nor the worse of his city life ; the same man he was when "the poetic genius of his country found him at the plough and threw her inspiring mantle over him." And what was he now to do with himself ? Into what occupation for the rest of his days was he to settle down ? It would puzzle the most sagacious even now, fifty years after the event, to say what he ought to have done that he did not do at that juncture, on which for weal or wo the future must have been so deeply felt by him to depend. And perhaps it might not have occurred to every one of the many prudent persons who have lamented over his follies, had he stood in Burns's shoes, to make over, unconditionally, to his brother one half of all he was worth. Gilbert was resolved still to struggle on with Mossiel, and Robert said, "there is my purse." The brothers, different as they were in the constitution of their souls, had one and the same heart. They loved one another—man and boy alike ; and the survivor cleared, with pious hands, the weeds from his brother's grave. There was a blessing in that two hundred pounds—and thirty years afterwards Gilbert repaid it with interest to Robert's widow and children, by an Edition in which he wiped away stains from the reputation of his benefactor, which had been suffered to remain

too long, and some of which, the most difficult too to be effaced, had been even let fall from the fingers of a benevolent biographer who thought himself in duty bound to speak what he most mistakenly believed to be the truth. "Oh Robert!" was all his mother could say on his return to Mossiel from Edinburgh. In her simple heart she was astonished at his fame, and could not understand it well, any more than she could her own happiness and her own pride. But his affection she understood better than he did, and far better still his generosity; and duly night and morning she asked a blessing on his head from Him who had given her such a son.

"Between the men of rustic life," said Burns—so at least it is reported—"and the polite world I observed little difference. In the former, though unpolished by fashion, and unenlightened by science, I have found much observation and much intelligence. But a refined and accomplished woman was a thing altogether new to me, and of which I had formed but a very inadequate idea." One of his biographers seems to have believed that his love for Jean Armour, the daughter of a Mauchline mason, must have died away under these more adequate ideas of the sex along with their corresponding emotions; and that he now married her with reluctance. Only think of Burns taking an Edinburgh Belle to wife! He flew, somewhat too fervently,

"To love's willing fetters, the arms of his Jean."

Her father had again to curse her for her infatuated love of her husband—for such if not by the law of Scotland—which may be doubtful—Burns certainly was by the law of heaven—and like a good Christian had again turned his daughter out of doors.
Had Burns deserted her he had merely been a heartless villain. In making her his lawful wedded wife he did no more than any other man, deserving the name of man, in the same circumstances would have done; and had he not, he would have walked in shame before men, and in fear and trembling before God. But he did so, not only because it was his most sacred duty, but because he loved her better than ever, and without her would have been miserable. Much had she suffered for his sake, and

he for hers ; but all that distraction and despair which had nearly driven him into a sugar plantation, were over and gone, forgotten utterly, or remembered but as a dismal dream endearing the placid day that for ever dispelled it. He writes about her to Mrs. Dunlop and others in terms of sobriety and good sense—"The most placid good nature and sweetness of disposition ; a warm heart, gratefully devoted with all its powers to love me ; vigorous health and sprightly cheerfulness, set off to the best advantage by a more than commonly handsome figure"—these he thought in a woman might, with a knowledge of the scriptures, make a good wife. During the few months he was getting his house ready for her at Ellisland he frequently travelled, with all the fondness of a lover, the long wilderness of moors to Mauchline, where she was in the house of her austere father reconciled to her at last. And though he has told us that it was his custom, in song-writing, to keep the image of some fair maiden before the eye of his fancy, "some bright particular star," and that Hymen was not the divinity he then invoked, yet it was on one of these visits, between Ellisland and Mossiel, that he penned under such homely inspiration as precious a love-offering as genius in the passion of hope ever laid in a virgin's bosom. His wife sung it to him that same evening—and indeed he never knew whether or no he had succeeded in any one of his lyrics, till he heard his words and the air together from her voice.

" Of a' the airts the wind can blaw,
 I dearly like the west,
 For there the bonnie lassie lives,
 The lassie I lo'e best :
 Th'ree wild woods grow, and rivers row,
 And mony a hill between ;
 But day and night my fancy's flight
 Is ever wi' my Jean.

" I see her in the dewy flowers,
 I see her sweet and fair :
 I hear her in the tunefu' birds,
 I hear her charm the air :
 There's not a bonny flower that springs,
 By fountain, shaw, or green,

There's not a bonny bird that sings,
But minds me o' my Jean.

" Oh blaw ye westlin winds, blaw saft
Amang the leafy trees,
Wi' balmy gale, frae hill and dale,
Bring hame the laden bees ;
And bring the lassie back to me
That's aye sae neat and clean ;
Ae smile o' her wad banish care,
Sae charming is my Jean.

" What sighs and vows among the knowes
Hae passed atween us twa !
How fond to meet, how wae to part,
That night she gaed awa !
The powers aboon can only ken,
To whom the heart is seen,
That name can be sae dear to me
As my sweet lovely Jean."

And here we ask you who may be reading these pages, to pause for a little, and consider with yourselves, what up to this time Burns had done to justify the condemnatory judgments that have been passed on his character as a man by so many admirers of his genius as a poet! Compared with men of ordinary worth, who have deservedly passed through life with the world's esteem, in what was it lamentably wanting? Not in tenderness, warmth, strength of the natural affections; and they are good till turned to evil. Not in the duties for which they were given, and which they make delights. Of which of these duties was he habitually neglectful? To the holiest of them all next to piety to his Maker, he was faithful beyond most—few better kept the fourth commandment. His youth, though soon too impassioned, had been long pure. If he were temperate by necessity and not nature, yet he was so as contentedly as if it had been by choice. He had lived on meal and water with some milk, because the family were too poor for better fare; and yet he rose to labor as the lark rises to sing.

In the corruption of our fallen nature he sinned, and, it has been said, became a libertine. Was he ever guilty of deliberate seduction? It is not so recorded; and we believe his whole

soul would have recoiled from such wickedness : but let us not affect ignorance of what we all know. Among no people on the face of the earth is the moral code so rigid, with regard to the intercourse of the sexes, as to stamp with ineffaceable disgrace every lapse from virtue ; and certainly not among the Scottish peasantry, austere as the spirit of religion has always been, and terrible ecclesiastical censure. Hateful in all eyes is the reprobate—the hoary sinner loathsome ; but many a grey head is now deservedly reverence that would not be so, were the memory of all that has been repented by the Elder, and pardoned unto him, to rise up against him among the congregation as he entered the House of God. There has been many a rueful tragedy in houses that in after times “ seemed asleep.” How many good, and happy fathers of families, who, were all their past lives to be pictured in ghastly revelation to the eyes of their wives and children, could never again dare to look them in the face ! It pleased God to give them a long life ; and they have escaped, not by their own strength, far away from the shadows of their misdeeds that are not now suffered to pursue them, but are chained down in the past, no more to be let loose. That such things were, is a secret none now live to divulge ; and though once known, they were never emblazoned. But Burns and men like Burns showed the whole world their dark spots by the very light of their genius ; and having died in what may almost be called their youth, there the dark spots still are, and men point to them with their fingers, to whose eyes there may seem but small glory in all that effulgence.

Burns now took possession at Whitsuntide (1788) of the farm of Ellisland, while his wife remained at Mossiel, completing her education in the dairy, till brought home next term to their new house, which the poet set a-building with alacrity, on a plan of his own, which was as simple a one as could be devised : kitchen and dining room in one, a double-bedded room with a bed-closet, and a garret. The site was pleasant, on the edge of a high bank of the Nith, commanding a wide and beautiful prospect,—holms, plains, woods, and hills, and a long reach of the sweeping river. While the house and offices were growing, he inhabited a hovel close at hand, and though occasionally giv-

ing vent to some splenetic humors in letters indited in his sooty cabin, and now and then yielding to fits of despondency about the "ticklish situation of a family of children," he says to his friend Ainslie, "I am decidedly of opinion that the step I have taken is vastly for my happiness." He had to qualify himself for holding his excise commission by six weeks' attendance on the business of that profession at Ayr—and we have seen that he made several visits to Mossigel. Currie cannot let him thus pass the summer without moralizing on his mode of life. "Pleased with surveying the grounds he was about to cultivate, and with the rearing of a building that should give shelter to his wife and children, and, as he fondly hoped, to his own grey hairs, sentiments of independence buoyed up his mind, pictures of domestic comfort and peace rose on his imagination ; and a few days passed away, as he himself informs us, the most tranquil, if not the happiest, which he had ever experienced." Let us believe that such days were not few, but many, and that we need not join with the good Doctor in grieving to think that Burns led all the summer a wandering and unsettled life. It could not be stationary ; but there is no reason to think that his occasional absence was injurious to his affairs on the farm.

| Currie writes as if he thought him incapable of self-guidance, and says, "It is to be lamented that at this critical period of his life, our poet was without the society of his wife and children. A great change had taken place in his situation ; his old habits were broken ; and the new circumstances in which he was placed, were calculated to give a new direction to his thoughts and conduct. But his application to the cares and labors of his farm was interrupted by several visits to his family in Ayrshire ; and as the distance was too great for a single day's journey, he generally slept a night at an inn on the road. On such occasions he sometimes fell into company, and forgot the resolutions he had formed. In a little while temptation assailed him nearer home." This is treating Burns like a child, a person of so *facile* a disposition as not to be trusted without a keeper on the king's high-way. If he was not fit to ride by himself into Ayrshire, and there was no safety for him at Sanquhar, his case was hopeless out of an asylum. A trustwor-

thy friend attended to the farm as overseer, when he was from home ; potatoes, grass, and grain grew, though he was away ; on September 9th, we find him where he ought to be, " I am busy with my harvest ;" and on the 16th, " This hovel that I shelter in, is pervious to every blast that blows, and every shower that falls, and I am only preserved from being chilled to death by being suffocated with smoke. You will be pleased to hear that I have laid aside idle *éclat*, and bind every day after my reapers." Pity 'twas that there had not been a comfortable house ready furnished for Mrs. Burns to step into at the beginning of summer, therein to be brought to bed of " little Frank, who, by the by, I trust will be no discredit to the honorable name of Wallace, as he has a fine manly countenance, and a figure that might do credit to a little fellow two months older ; and likewise an excellent good temper, though when he pleases, he has a pipe not only quite so loud as the horn that his immortal namesake blew as a signal to take the pin out of Stirling bridge."

Dear good old blind Dr. Blacklock, about this time, was anxious to know from Burns himself how he was thriving, and intitid to him a pleasant epistle.

" Dear Burns, thou brother of my heart,
Both for thy virtues and thy art ;
If art it may be call'd in thee,
Which Nature's bounty, large and free,
With pleasure in thy heart diffuses,
And warms thy soul with all the Muses.
Whether to laugh with easy grace,
Thy numbers move the sage's face,
Or bid the softer passions rise,
And ruthless souls with grief surprise,
'Tis Nature's voice distinctly felt
Through thee her organ, thus to melt.

" Most anxiously I wish to know,
With thee of late how matters go ;
How keeps thy much-loved Jean her health ?
What promises thy farm of wealth ?
Whether the muse persists to smile,
And all thy anxious cares beguile ?
Whether bright fancy keeps alive ?
And how thy darling infants thrive ?"

It appears from his reply, that Burns had entrusted Heron with a letter to Blacklock, which the preacher had not delivered, and the poet exclaims

“ The ill-thief blaw the Heron south !
 And never drink be near his drouth !
 He tald mysel by word o' mouth
 He'd tak my letter ;
 I lippened to the chiel in trouth
 And bade nae better.

“ But aiblins honest Master Heron,
 Had at the time some dainty fair one,
 To ware his theologic care on,
 And holy study ;
 And tir'd o' sauls to waste his lear on,
 E'en tried the body.”

Currie says in a note, “ Mr. Heron, author of the History of Scotland lately published, and among various other works, of *a respectable life of our poet himself.*” Burns knew his character well; the unfortunate fellow had talents of no ordinary kind, and there are many good things and much good writing in his life of Burns; but respectable it is not, basely calumnious, and the original source of many of the worst falsehoods even now believed too widely to be truths, concerning the moral character of a man as far superior to himself in virtue as in genius. Burns then tells his venerated friend, that he has absolutely become a gauger.

“ Ye glaikit, gleesome, dainty damies,
 Wha by Castalia's wimpling streamies,
 Loup, sing, and lave your pretty limbies,
 Ye ken, ye ken,
 - That strang necessity supreme is,
 'Mang sons o' men.

“ I hae a wife and twa wee, laddies,
 They maun hae brose and brats o' duddies ;
 Ye ken yoursels my heart right proud is,
 I need na vaunt,
 But I'll sned besoms—thraw saugh woodies,
 Before they wan.

“ Lord help me thro’ this warld o’ care !
 I’m weary sick o’t late and air !
 Not but I hae a richer share
 Than mony ithers ;
 But why should ae man better fare,
 And a’ men brithers ?

“ Come, **FIRM RESOLVE**, take thou the van,
 Thou stalk o’ carl-hemp in man !
 And let us mind, faint heart ne’er wan
 A lady fair ;
 Wha does the utmost that he can,
 Will whiles do mair.

“ But to conclude my silly rhyme
 (I’m scant o’ verse, and scant o’ time),
TO MAKE A HAPPY FIRE-SIDE CLIME
TO WEANS AND WIFE,
THAT’S THE TRUE PATHOS AND SUBLIME,
OF HUMAN LIFE.”

These noble stanzas were written towards the end of October, and in another month Burns brought his wife home to Ellisland, and his three children, for she had twice borne him twins. The happiest period of his life, we have his own words for it, was that winter.

But why not say that the three years he lived at Ellisland were all happy, as happiness goes in this world ? As happy perhaps as they might have been had he been placed in some other condition apparently far better adapted to yield him what all human hearts do most desire. His wife never had an hour’s sickness, and was always cheerful as day, one of those

“ Sound healthy children of the God of heaven,”

whose very presence is positive pleasure, and whose contentedness with her lot inspires comfort into a husband’s heart, when at times oppressed with a mortal heaviness that no words could lighten. Burns says with gloomy grandeur, “ There is a foggy atmosphere native to my soul in the hour of care which makes the dreary objects seem larger than life.” The objects seen by imagination ; and he who suffers thus cannot be relieved by any

direct applications to that faculty, only by those that touch the heart—the homelier the more sanative, and none so sure as a wife's affectionate ways, quietly moving about the house affairs, which, insignificant as they are in themselves, are felt to be little truthful realities that banish those monstrous phantoms, showing them to be but glooms and shadows.

And how fared the Gauger? Why he did his work. Currie says, "his farm no longer occupied the principal part of his care or his thoughts. It was not at Ellisland that he was now in general to be found. Mounted on horseback, this high-minded poet was pursuing the defaulters of the revenue among the hills and vales of Nithsdale; his roving eye wandering over the charms of nature, and muttering his wayward fancies as he moved along." And many a happy day he had when thus riding about the country in search of smugglers of all sorts, zealous against all manner of contraband. He delighted in the broad brow of the day, whether glad or gloomy, like his own forehead; in the open air whether still or stormy, like his own heart. "While pursuing the defaulters of the revenue," a gauger has not always to track them by his eyes or his nose. Information has been lodged of their whereabouts, and he deliberately makes a seizure. Sentimentalists may see in this something very shocking to the delicate pleasures of susceptible minds, but Burns did not; and some of his sweetest lyrics, redolent of the liquid dew of youth, were committed to whitey-brown not scented by the rose's attar. Burns on duty was always as sober as a judge. A man of his sense knew better than to muddle his brains, when it was needful to be quick-witted and ready-handed too; for he had to do with old women who were not to be sneezed at, and middle-aged men who could use both club and cutlass.

"He held them with his glittering eye;"

but his determined character was not the worse of being exhibited on broad shoulders. They drooped, as you know, but from the habits of a strong man who had been a laborer from his youth upwards, and a gauger's life was the very one that might have been prescribed to a man like him, subject to low

spirits, by a wise physician. Smugglers themselves are seldom drunkards—gaugers not often—though they take their dram; your drunkards belong to that comprehensive class that cheat the excise.

Then Burns was not always “mounted on horseback pursuing the defaulters of the revenue among the hills and vales of Nithsdale ;” he sat sometimes by himself in Friar’s-Carse Hermitage.

“ Thou whom chance may hither lead,—
Be thou clad in russet weed,
Be thou deck’t in silken stole,
Grave these counsels on thy soul.

“ Life is but a day at most,
Sprung from night, in darkness lost;
Hope not sunshine ev’ry hour,
Fear not clouds will always lower.

“ As the shades of ev’ning close,
Beck’ning thee to long repose ;
As life itself becomes disease,
Seek the chimney-neuk of ease.
There ruminate with sober thought,
On all thou’st seen, and heard, and wrought ;
And teach the sportive younkers round,
Saws of experience, sage and sound.
Say, man’s true, genuine estimate,
The grand criterion of his fate,
Is not, Art thou high or low ?
Did thy fortune ebb or flow ?
Did many talents gild thy span ?
Or frugal nature grudge thee one ?
Tell them, and press it on their mind,
As thou thyself must shortly find,
The smile or frown of awful heav’n,
To virtue or to vice is giv’n.
Say to be just, and kind, and wise,
There solid self-enjoyment lies ;
That foolish, selfish, faithless ways,
Lead to the wretched, vile and base.

“ Thus resign’d and quiet, creep
To the bed of lasting sleep,

Sleep, whence thou shalt ne'er awake,
Night, where dawn shall never break,
Till future life, future no more,
To light and joy the good restore,
To light and joy unknown before.

“ Stranger, go. Heav’n be thy guide !
Quod the beadsman of Nith-side.”

Burns acquired the friendship of many of the best families in the vale of Nith, at Friar’s Carse, Terraughty, Blackwood, Closeburn, Dalswinton, Glenae, Kirkconnel, Arbigland, and other seats of the gentry old or new. Such society was far more enjoyable than that of Edinburgh, for here he was not a lion but a man. He had his jovial hours, and sometimes they were excessive, as the whole world knows from “the Song of the Whistle.” But the Laureate did not enter the lists—if he had, it is possible he might have conquered Craigdarroch. These were formidable orgies; but we have heard “Oh ! Willie brewed a peck o’ maut,” sung after a presbytery dinner, the bass of the moderator giving somewhat of a solemn character to the chorus.

But why did Burns allow his genius to lie idle—why did he not construct some great work, such as a Drama ? His genius did not lie idle, for over and above the songs alluded to, he wrote ever so many for his friend Johnson’s Museum. Nobody would have demanded from him a Drama, had he not divulged his determination to compose one about “The Bruce,” with the homely title of “Rob M’Quechan’s Elshin.” But Burns did not think himself an universal genius, and at this time writes, “No man knows what nature has fitted him for till he try ; and if after a preparatory course of some years’ study of men and books I shall find myself unequal to the task, there is no harm done. Virtue and study are their own reward. I have got Shakspeare, and begun with him,” &c. He knew that a great National Drama was not to be produced as easily as “The Cot-tar’s Saturday Night ;” and says, “though the rough material of fine writing is undoubtedly the gift of genius, the workmanship is as certainly the united efforts of labor, attention, and pains.”

And here, one day between breakfast and dinner he composed "Tam o' Shanter." The fact is hardly credible, but we are willing to believe it. Dorset only corrected his famous "To all ye ladies now on land, we men at sea indite," the night before an expected engagement, a proof of his self-possession; but he had been working at it for days. Dryden dashed off his "Alexander's Feast" in no time, but the labor of weeks was bestowed on it before it assumed its present shape. "Tam o' Shanter" is superior in force and fire to that Ode. Never did genius go at such a gallop—setting off at score, and making play, but without whip or spur, from starting to winning post. All is inspiration. His wife with her weans a little way aside among the broom watched him at work as he was striding up and down the brow of the Scaur, and reciting to himself like one demented,

" Now Tam, O Tam ! had they been queans,
A' plump and strapping, in their teens ;
Their sarks, instead o' creeshie flannen,
Been snaw-white seventeen hunder linen !
Thir breeks o' mine, my only pair,
That ance were plush, o' guid blue hair,
I wad hae gi'n them aff my hurdies,
For ae blink o' the bonnie burdies !"

His bonnie Jean must have been sorely perplexed—but she was familiar with all his moods, and like a good wife left him to his cogitations. It is "all made out of the builder's brain;" for the story that suggested it is no story after all, the dull lie of a drunkard dotard. From the poet's imagination it came forth a perfect poem, impregnated with the native spirit of Scottish superstition. Few or none of our old traditional tales of witches are very appalling—they had not their origin in the depths of the people's heart—there is a meanness in their mysteries—the ludicrous mixes with the horrible—much matter there is for the poetical, and more perhaps for the picturesque—but the pathetic is seldom found there—and never—for Shakespeare we fear was not a Scotsman—the sublime. Let no man therefore find fault with " Tam o' Shanter," because it strikes not

a deeper chord. It strikes a chord that twangs strangely, and we know not well what it means. To vulgar eyes, too, were such unaccountable on-goings most often revealed of old : such seers were generally *doited or dazed*—half-born idiots or *neerdeweels in drink*. Had Milton's Satan shown his face in Scotland, folk either would not have known him, or thought him mad. The devil is much indebted to Burns for having raised his character without impairing his individuality—

“ O thou ! whatever title suit thee,
 Auld Hornie, Satan, Nick, or Clootie,
 Wha in yon cavern grim an' sootie,
 Closed under hatches,
 Spairges about the brumstane cootie,
 To scaud poor wretches.

“ Hear me, auld *Hangie*, for a wee,
 An' let poor damned bodies be ;
 I'm sure sma' pleasure it can gie,
 E'en to a *de'il*,
 To skelp an' scaud poor dogs like me,
 An' hear us squeel ?”

This is conciliatory ; and we think we see him smile. We can almost believe for a moment, that it does give him no great pleasure, that he is not inaccessible to pity, and at times would fain devolve his duty upon other hands, though we cannot expect him to resign. The poet knows that he is the Prince of the Air.

“ Great is thy pow'r an' great thy fame ;
 Far kend and noted is thy name ;
 An' tho' yon lowin heugh's thy hame,
 Thou travels far ;
 An' faith ! thou's neither lag nor lame,
 Nor blate nor scaur.

“ Whyles, ranging like a roarin lion,
 For prey, a' holes an' corners tryin' ;
 Whyles on the strong-wing'd tempest flyin',
 Tirling the kirks ;
 Whyles, in the human bosom prying,
 Unseen thou lurks.”

That is magnificent—Milton's self would have thought so—and it could have been written by no man who had not studied scripture. The Address is seen to take ; the Old Intrusionist is glorified by “tirling the kirks ;” and the poet thinks it right to lower his pride.

“ *I've heard my reverend Grannie say,*
 In lanely glens ye like to stray :
 Or where auld-ruin'd castles, grey,
 Nod to the moon,
 Ye fright the nightly wand'rer's way,
 Wi' eldritch croon.

“ When twilight did my Grannie summon
 To say her prayers, douce, honest woman !
 Aft yont the dyke she's heard you bummin,
 Wi' eerie drone ;
 Or, rustlin' through the boortrees comin'
 Wi' heavy groan.

“ Ae dreary, windy, winter night,
 The stars shot down wi' sklentin' light,
 Wi' you, mysel, I gat a fright,
 Ayont the lough ;
 Ye, like a rash-bush, stood in sight,
 Wi' waving sugh.”

Throughout the whole Address, the elements are so combined in him, as to give the world “assurance o' a deil ;” but then it is the Deil of Scotland.

Just so in “ Tam o' Shanter.” We know not what some great German genius like Goethe might have made of him ; but we much mistake the matter, if “ Tam o' Shanter ” at Alloway Kirk be not as exemplary a piece of humanity as Faustus on May-day Night upon the Hartz Mountains. Faust does not well know what he would be at, but Tam does ; and though his views of human life be rather hazy, he has glimpses given him of the invisible world. His wife—but her tongue was no scandal—calls him

“ A skellum,
 A blethering, blustering, drunken blellum ;
 That frae November till October,
 Ae market-day thou was nae sober,
 That ilka melder, wi' the miller,
 Thou sat as lang as thou had siller ;

That ev'ry naig was ca'd a shoe on,
 The smith and thee gat roaring fou on,
 That at the L—d's house, ev'n on Sunday,
 Thou drank wi' Kirton Jean till Monday.
 She prophesy'd, that late or soon,
 Thou would be found deep drown'd in Doon ;
 Or catch'd wi' warlocks in the mirk,
 By Alloway's auld haunted kirk."

That is her view of the subject ; but what is Tam's ? The same as Wordsworth's,—“ He sits down to his cups, while the storm is roaring, and heaven and earth are in confusion ; the night is driven on by song and tumultuous noise ; laughter and jests thicken as the beverage improves upon the palate ; conjugal fidelity archly bends to the service of general benevolence ; selfishness is not absent, but wearing the mask of social cordiality ; and while these various elements of humanity are blended into one proud and happy composition of elated spirits, the anger of the tempest without doors only heightens and sets off the enjoyment within. I pity him who cannot perceive that, in all this, though there was no moral purpose, there is a moral effect.

‘ Kings may be blest but Tam was glorious,
 O'er a' the *ills* of life victorious.’

— What a lesson do these words convey of charitable indulgence for the vicious habits of the principal actor in the scene and of those who resemble him ! Men who, to the rigidly virtuous, are objects almost of loathing, and whom therefore they cannot serve. The poet, penetrating the unsightly and disgusting surfaces of things, has unveiled, with exquisite skill, the finer ties of imagination and feeling that often bind those beings to practices productive of much unhappiness to themselves and to those whom it is their duty to cherish ; and as far as he puts the reader into possession of this intelligent sympathy, he qualifies him for exercising a salutary influence over the minds of those who are thus deplorably deceived.”

We respectfully demur from the opinion of this wise and benign judge, that “ there was no moral purpose in all this, though there is a moral effect.” So strong was his moral purpose and

so deep the moral feeling moved within him by the picture he had so vividly imagined, that Burns pauses, in highest moral mood, at the finishing touch,

“ Kings may be blest but Tam was glorious ; ”

and then, by imagery of unequalled loveliness, illustrates an universal and everlasting truth :

“ But pleasures are like poppies spread,
You seize the flow'r, its bloom is shed
Or like the snow-falls in the river,
A moment white—then melts for ever ;
Or like the borealis race,
That fit ere you can point their place ;
Or like the rainbow's lovely form,
Evanishing amid the storm.”

Next instant he returns to Tam ; and, humanized by that exquisite poetry, we cannot help being sorry for him “ mountin' his beast in sic a night.” At the first clap of thunder he forgets Souter Johnmy—how “ conjugal fidelity archly bent to the service of general benevolence ”—such are the terms in which the philosophical Wordsworth speaks of

“ The landlady and Tam grew gracious ;
Wi' favors, secret, sweet, and precious : ”

and as the haunted Ruin draws nigh, he remembers not only Kate's advice but her prophecy. He has passed by some fearful places ; at the slightest touch of the necromancer, how fast one after another wheels by, telling at what a rate Tam rode ! And we forget that we are not riding behind him,

“ When, glimmering thro' the groaning trees,
Kirk-Alloway seem'd in a breeze ! ”

We defy any man of woman born to tell us who these witches and warlocks are, and why the devil brought them here into Alloway-Kirk. True

“ This night a child might understand,
The deil had business on his hand ; ”

but that is not the question—the question is *what business?*
Was it a ball given him on the anniversary of the Fall?

“There sat auld Nick, in shape o’ beast;
A towzie tyke, black, grim, and large,
To gie them music was his charge.”

and pray who is to pay the piper? We fear that young witch
Nannie!

“For Satan glow’r’d, and fidget fu’ fain,
And hotch’d and blew wi’ might and main:”

and this may be the nuptial night of the Prince—for that tyke
is he—of the Fallen Angels!

How was Tam able to stand the sight, “glorious and heroic”
as he was, of the open presses?

“Coffins stood round like open presses,
That shaw’d the dead in their last dresses;
And by some devilish cantraip slight,
Each in its cauld hand held a light.”

Because show a man some sight that is altogether miraculously
dreadful, and he either faints or feels no fear. Or say rather,
let a man stand the first *glower* at it, and he will make compara-
tively light of the details. There was Auld Nick himself,
there was no mistaking him, and there were

“Wither’d beldams, auld and droll,
Rigwoodie hags wad spean a foal,
Lowping an’ flinging—”

to such dancing what cared Tam who held the candle? He
was bedevilled, bewarlocked and bewitched, and therefore

“Able
To note upon the haly table,
A murderer’s banes in gibbet airns;
Twa span-lang, wee, unchristen’d bairns;
A thief, new-cutted frae a rape,
Wi’ his last gasp his gab did gape;
Five tomahawks, wi’ bluid red rusted;
Five scimitars, wi’ murder crusted;

A garter, which a babe had strangled ;
A knife, a father's throat had mangled,
Whom his ain son o' life bereft,
The grey hairs yet stack to the heft."

This collection has all the effect of a selection. The bodies were not placed there; but following each other's heels, they stretched themselves out of their own accord upon the haly table. They had received a summons to the festival, which murderer and murdered must obey. But mind ye, Tam could not see what you see. Who told him that *that* garter had strangled a babe? That *that* was a parricide's knife? Nobody—and that is a flaw. For Tam looks with his bodily eyes only, and can know only what they show him; but Burns knew it, and believed Tam knew it too; and we know it for Burns tells us, and we believe Tam as wise as ourselves; for we almost turn Tam—the poet himself being the only real warlock of them all.

You know why that Haly Table is so pleasant to the apples of all those evil eyes? They feed upon the dead, not merely because they love wickedness, but because they inspire it into the quick. Who ever murdered his father but at the instigation of that "towzie tyke, black, grim, and large?" Who but for him ever strangled her new-born child? Scimitars and tomahawks! Why, such weapons never were in use in Scotland. True. But they have long been in use in the wilderness of the western world, and among the orient cities of Mahoun, and his empire extends to the uttermost parts of the earth.

And here we shall say a few words, which perhaps were expected from us when speaking a little while ago of some of his first productions, about Burns's humorous strains, more especially those in which he has sung the praises of joviality and good fellowship, as it has been thought by many, that in them are conspicuously displayed not only some striking qualities of his poetical genius, but likewise of his personal character. Among the countless number of what are called convivial songs floating in our literature, how few seem to have been inspired by such a sense and spirit of social enjoyment as men can sympathize with in their ordinary moods, when withdrawn from the festive board, and engaged without blame in the common amusements or recre-

ations of a busy or studious life ! The finest of these few have been gracefully and gaily thrown off, in some mirthful minute, by Shakspeare and Ben Jonson and "the Rest," inebriating the mind as with "divine gas" into sudden exhilaration that passes away not only without headache, but with heartache for a time allayed by the sweet *afflatus*. In our land, too, as in Greece of old, genius has imbibed inspiration from the wine-cup, and sung of human life in strains befitting poets who desired that their foreheads should perpetually be wreathed with flowers. But putting aside them and their little lyres, with some exceptions, how nauseous are the bacchanalian songs of Merry England !

On this topic we but touch ; and request you to recollect, that there are not half a dozen, if so many, drinking songs in all Burns. "Willie brewed a peck o' maut," is, indeed, the chief ; and you cannot even look at it without crying, "O rare Rob Burns !" So far from inducing you to believe that the poet was addicted to drinking, the freshness and fervor of its glee convince you that it came gushing out of a healthful heart, in the exhilaration of a night that needed not the influence of the flowing bowl, which friendship, nevertheless, did so frequently replenish. Wordsworth, who has told the world that he is a water drinker, and in the lake country he can never be at a loss for his favorite beverage, regards this song with the complacency of a philosopher, knowing well that it is all a pleasant exaggeration ; and that had the moon not lost patience and gone to bed, she would have seen "Rob and Allan" on their way back to Ellisland, along the bold banks of the Nith, as steady as a brace of bishops.

Of the contest immortalized in the "Whistle," it may be observed, that in the course of events it is likely to be as rare as enormous ; and that as centuries intervened between Sir Robert Laurie's victory over the Dane in the reign of James VI., and Craigdarroch's victory over Sir Robert Laurie in that of George III., so centuries, in all human probability, will elapse before another such battle will be lost and won. It is not a little amusing to hear good Dr. Currie on this passage in the life of Burns. In the text of his Memoir he says, speaking of the poet's intimacy with the best families in Nithsdale, "Their so-

cial parties too often seduced him from his rustic labors and his rustic fare, overthrew the unsteady fabric of his resolutions, *and inflamed those propensities which temperance might have weakened, and prudence ultimately suppressed.*" In a note he adds in illustration, "The poem of the Whistle celebrates a bacchanalian event among the gentlemen of Nithsdale, where Burns appears as umpire. Mr. Riddell died before our bard, and some elegiac verses to his memory will be found in Volume IV. From him and from all the members of his family, Burns received not kindness, but friendship; *and the society he met with in general at Friar's Carse was calculated to improve his habits, as well as his manners.* Mr. Fergusson of Craigdarroch, so well known for his eloquence and social habits, died soon after our poet. Sir Robert Laurie, the third person in the drama, survives; and has since been engaged in contests of a bloodier nature—long may he live to fight the battles of his country! (1799)." Three better men lived not in the shire; but they were gentlemen, and Burns was but an exciseman; and Currie, unconsciously influenced by an habitual deference to rank, pompously moralizes on the poor poet's "propensities, which temperance might have weakened, and prudence ultimately suppressed;" while in the same breath, and with the same ink, he eulogises the rich squire for "his eloquence and social habits," so well calculated to "improve the habits, as well as the manners," of the bard and gauger! Now suppose that "the heroes" had been not Craigdarroch, Glenriddel, and Maxwellton, but Burns, Mitchell, and Findlater, a gauger, a supervisor, and a collector of excise, and that the contest had taken place not at Friar's-Carse, but at Ellisland, not for a time-honored hereditary ebony whistle, but a wooden ladle not a week old, and that Burns the Victorious had acquired an implement more elegantly fashioned, though of the same materials, than the one taken from his mouth the moment he was born, what blubbering would there not have been among his biographers! James Currie, how exhortatory! Josiah Walker, how lachrymose!

" Next uprose our Bard like a prophet in drink :
‘ Craigdarroch, thou'l soar when creation shall sink !

But if thou would flourish immortal in rhyme,
Come—one bottle more—and have at the sublime!

“ Thy line, they have struggled for Freedom with Bruce,
Shall heroes and patriots ever produce :
So thine be the laurel, and mine be the bay ;
The field thou hast won, by yon bright god of day !”

How very shocking ! Then only hear in what a culpable spirit Burns writes to Riddel, on the forenoon of the day of battle !— “ Sir, Big with the idea of this important day at Friar’s-Carse, I have invoked the elements and skies in the fond persuasion that they would announce it to the astonished world by some phenomena of terrific import. Yester-night, until a very late hour, did I wait with anxious horror for the appearance of some comet firing half the sky ; or aerial armies of conquering Scandinavians, darting athwart the startled heavens, rapid as the ragged lightning, and horrid as those convulsions of nature that bury nations. The elements, however, seem to take the matter very quietly ; they did not even usher in this morning with triple suns and a shower of blood, symbolical of the three potent heroes, and the mighty claret-shed of the day. For me, as Thomson in his Winter says of the storm, I shall ‘ *Hear astonished, and astonished sing.*’ To leave the heights of Parnassus and come to the humble vale of prose, I have some misgivings that I take too much upon me, when I request you to get your guest, Sir Robert Laurie, to post the two inclosed covers for me, the one of them to Sir William Cunningham, of Robertland, Bart., Kilmarnock—the other to Mr. Allen Masterton, writing-master, Edinburgh. The first has a kindred claim on Sir Robert, as being a brother baronet, and likewise a keen Foxite ; the other is one of the worthiest men in the world, and a man of real genius ; so allow me to say, he has a fraternal claim on you. I want them franked for to-morrow, as I cannot get them to the post to-night. I shall send a servant again for them in the evening. Wishing that your head may be crowned with laurels to-night, and free from aches to-morrow, I have the honor to be, sir, your deeply-indebted and obedient servant, R. B.” Why, you see that this “ Letter,” and “ The Whistle”—perhaps an improper poem in priggish

eyes, but in the eyes of Bacchus the best of triumphal odes—make up the whole of Burns's share in this transaction. *He was not at the Carse.* The “three potent heroes” were too thoroughly gentlemen to have asked a fourth to sit by with an empty bottle before him as umpire of that debate. Burns that evening was sitting with his eldest child on his knee, teaching it to say Dad—that night he was lying in his own bed, with bonnie Jean by his side—and “yon bright god of day” saluted him at morning on the Scaur above the glittering Nith.

Turn to the passages in his youthful poetry, where he speaks of himself or others “wi' just a drappie in their ee.” Would you that he had never written Death and Dr. Hornbook?

“The clachan yill had made me canty,
I was na fou, but just had plenty ;
I stacher'd whyles, but yet took tent ay
To free the ditches ;
An' hillocks, stanes, an' bushes, kenn'd ay
Frae ghaists an' witches.

“The rising moon began to glow'r
The distant Cumnock hills out-owre :
To count her horns, wi' a' my pow'r,
I set mysel' ;
But whether she had three or four,
I cou'd na tell.

“I was come round about the hill,
And toddlin down on Willie's mill,
Setting my staff wi' a' my skill,
To keep me sicker :
Tho' leeward whyles, against my will,
I took a bicker.

“I there wi' SOMETHING did forgather,” &c.

Then and there, as you learn, ensued that “celestial colloquy divine,” which being reported drove the doctor out of the country, by unextinguishable laughter, into Glasgow, where half a century afterwards he died universally respected. SOMETHING had more to say, and long before that time Burns had been sobered.

“ But just as he began to tell,
 The auld kirk-hammer strak the bell
 Some wee short hour ayont the twal,
 Which rais'd us baith :
I took the way that pleas'd mysel',
And sae did Death.”

In those pregnant Epistles to his friends, in which his generous and noble character is revealed so sincerely, he now and then alludes to the socialities customary in Kyle ; and the good people of Scotland have always enjoyed such genial pictures. When promising himself the purest pleasures society can afford, in company with “ Auld Lapraik,” whom he warmly praises for the tenderness and truthfulness of his “ sangs ”—

“ There was ae sang, amang the rest,
 Aboon them a' it pleased me best,
 That some kind husband had address
 To some sweet wife :
 It thirl'd the heart-strings thro' the breast,
 A' to the life ; ”

and when luxuriating in the joy of conscious genius holding communion with the native muse, he exclaims—

“ Gie me ae spark o' Nature's fire,
 That's a' the learning I desire ;
 Then tho' I drudge thro' dub an' mire
 At pleugh or cart,
 My muse, though hamely in attire,
 May touch the heart ; ”

where does Burns express a desire to meet his brother-bard ? Where but in the resorts of their fellow-laborers, when released from toil, and flinging weariness to the wind, they flock into the heart of some holiday, attired in sunshine, and feeling that life is life ?

“ But Mauchline race, or Mauchline fair,
 I should be proud to meet you there ;
 We'se gie ae night's discharge to care,
 If we forgather,
 An' hae a swap o' *rhymin-ware*
 Wi' anither.

“The four-gill chap, we’se gar him clatter,
 An’ kirsen him wi’ reekin water ;
 Syne we’ll sit down an’ tak our whitter,
 To cheer our heart ;
 An’ faith we’se be acquainted better
 Before we part.

“Awa, ye selfish warly race,
 Wha think that havins, sense, an’ grace,
 Ev’n love an’ friendship, should give place
 To *catch the plack* !
 I dinna like to see your face,
 Nor hear your crack

“But ye whom social pleasure charms,
 Whose hearts the tide of kindness warms,
 Who hold your *being* on the terms,
 ‘Each aid the others,’
 Come to my bowl, come to my arms,
 My friends, my brothers !”

Yet after all, “the four-gill chap” clattered but on paper. Lapraik was an elderly man of sober life, impoverished by a false friend in whom he had confided ; and Burns, who wore good clothes, and paid his tailor as punctually as the men he dealt with, had not much money out of seven pounds a year, to spend in “the change-house.” He allowed no man to pay his “lawin,” but neither was he given to treating—save the sex ; and in his “Epistle to James Smith,” he gives a more correct account of his habits, when he goes thus off careeringly—

“My pen I here fling to the door,
 And kneel : ‘Ye Powers !’ and warm implore,
 Tho’ I should wander *terra o’er*
 In all her climes :
 Grant me but this—I ask no more—
 Ay rowth o’ rhymes.

“While ye are pleas’d to keep me hale,
 I’ll sit down o’er my scanty meal,
 Be’t water-brose, or muslin-kail,
 Wi’ cheerfu’ face,
 As lang’s the Muses dinna fail
 To say the grace.”

Read the “Auld Farmer’s New-Year Morning Salutation to his Auld Mare Maggie.” Not a soul but them-two-selves is in the stable—in the farm-yard—nor as far as we think of, in the house. Yes—there is one in the house—but she is somewhat infirm, and not yet out of bed. Sons and daughters have long since been married, and have houses of their own—such of them as may not have been buried. The servants are employed somewhere else out of doors—and so are the “four gallant brutes as e’er did draw” a moiety of Maggie’s “bairn-time.” The Address is an Autobiography. The master remembers himself, along with his mare—in days when she was “dappl’t, sleek, and glaizie, a bonnie grey;” and he “the pride o’ a’ the parishen.”

“ That day we pranc’d wi muckle pride,
 When ye bure hame my bonnie bride ;
 An’ sweet an’ gracefu’ she did ride,
 Wi’ maiden air !
 Kyle Stewart I could bragged wide,
 For sic a pair.”

What passages in their common life does he next select to “roose” mare and master? “In tug or tow?” In cart, plough, or harrow? These all rise before him at the right time, and in a cheerful spirit; towards the close of his address he grows serious, but not sad—as well he may; and at the close, as well he may, tender and grateful. But the image he sees galloping, next to that of the Broose, comes second, because it is second best:

“ When thou an’ I were young an’ skeigh,
 An’ stable-meals at fairs were dreigh,
 How thou wad prance, an’ snore, an’ skreigh,
 An’ tak the road !
 Town’s bodies ran, and stood abeigh,
 An’ ca’t thee mad.

“ *When thou wast corn’t, an’ I was mellow,*
We took the road ay like a swallow?”

We do not blame the old farmer for having got occasionally mellow some thirty years ago—we do not blame Burns for mak-

ing him pride himself on his shame; nay, we bless them both as we hear these words whispered close to the old Mare's lug:

“ Monie a sair daurk we twa hae wrought,
 An' wi' the weary warl' fought!
 An' monie an anxious day I thought
 We wad be beat!
 Yet here to crazy age we're brought,
 Wi' something yet.

“ And think na, my auld trusty servan',
 That now perhaps thou's less deservin',
 An' thy auld days may end in starvin',
 For my last *fou*,
 A heapit *stimpard*, I'll reserve ane
 Laid by for you.

“ We've worn to crazy years thegither :
 We'll toyte about wi' ane anither ;
 Wi' tentie care I'll flit thy tether,
 To some hain'd rig,
 Whare ye may nobly rax your leather,
 Wi' sma' fatigue.”

Or will you turn to “ The Twa Dogs,” and hear Luath, in whom the best humanities mingle with the canine—the Poet’s own colley, whom some cruel wretch murdered ; and gibbeted to everlasting infamy would have been the murderer, had Burns but known his name ?

“ The dearest comfort o’ their lives,
 Their grushie weans an’ faithfu’ wives ;
 The prattling things are just their pride,
 That sweetens a’ their fireside

“ An’ whiles twalpenny worth o’ nappy
 Can mak the bodies unco happy ;
 They lay aside their private cares,
 To mend the Kirk and State affairs :
 They’ll talk o’ patronage and priests,
 Wi’ kindling fury in their breasts,
 Or tell what new taxation’s comin’,
 An’ ferlie at the folk in Lon’on.

" As bleak-fac'd Hallowmass returns,
 They get the jovial, rantin kirns,
 When rural life, o' every station,
 Unite in common recreation ;
 Love blinks, Wit slaps, an' social Mirth
 Forgets there's Care upo' the earth.

" That merry day the year begins,
 They bar the door on frosty winds ;
 The nappy reeks wi' mantling ream ;
 An' sheds a heart-inspiring steam ;
 The luntin pipe, and sneeshin mill,
 Are handed round wi' richt guid will ;
 The cantie auld folks crackin crouse,
 The young anes rantin thro' the house,
 My heart has been sae fain to see them,
 That I for joy hae barkit wi' them."

Yet how happens it that in the "Halloween" no mention is made of this source of enjoyment, and that the parties concerned pursue the ploy with unflagging passion through all its charms and spells ? Because the festival is kept alive by the poetic power of superstition that night awakened from its slumber in all those simple souls ; and *that* serves instead of strong drink. They fly from freak to freak, without a thought but of the witcheries—the means and appliances needful to make them potent ; this Burns knew to be nature, and therefore he delays all "creature comforts" till the end, when the curtain has dropped on that visionary stage, and the actors return to the floor of their everyday world. Then—

" Wi' merry sangs, an' friendly cracks,
 I wat they didna weary ;
 An' unco' tales, an' funny jokes,
 Their sports were cheap an' cheery,
 Till *butter'd so'ns*, wi fragrant lunt,
 Set a' their gabs a-steerin ;
 Syne, wi' a social glass o' strunt,
 They parted aff careerin
 Fu' blythe that night."

We see no reason why, in the spirit of these observations, moralists may not read with pleasure and approbation, "The

Author's Earnest Cry and Prayer to the Scotch Representatives in the House of Commons." Its political economy is as sound as its patriotism is stirring ; and he must be indeed a dunce who believes that Burns uttered it either as a defence or an encouragement of a national vice, or that it is calculated to stimulate poor people into pernicious habits. It is an address that Cobbett, had he been a Scotsman and one of the Forty-Five, would have rejoiced to lay on the table of the House of Commons ; for Cobbett, in all that was best of him, was a kind of Burns in his way, and loved the men who work. He maintained the cause of malt, and it was a leading article in the creed of his faith that the element distilled therefrom is like the air they breathe, if the people have it not, they die. Beer may be best ; and Burns was the champion of beer, as well as of what bears a brisker name. He spoke of it in "The Earnest Cry," and likewise in the "Scotch Drink," as one of the staffs of life which had been struck from the poor man's hand by fiscal oppression. Tea was then little practised in Ayrshire cottages ; and we do not at this moment remember the word in Burns's Poems. He threatens a rising if Ministers will not obey the voice of the People :

"Auld Scotland has a raucle tongue ;
She's just a devil wi' a rung ;
An' if she promise auld or young
To tak their part,
Tho' by the neck she should be strung,
She'll no desert."

In the Postscript, the patriotism and poetry of "The Earnest Cry" wax stronger and brighter—and no drunkard would dare to read aloud in the presence of men—by heart he never could get it—such a strain as this—familiar to many million ears :

"Let half-starv'd slaves, in warmer skies,
See future wines, rich clust'ring, rise ;
Their lot auld Scotland ne'er envies,
But blythe and frisky,
She eyes her freeborn, martial boys,
Tak aff their whisky."

“ What tho’ their Phœbus kinder warms,
 While fragrance blooms, and beauty charms ;
 When wretches range, in famish’d swarms,
 The scented groves,
 Or hounded forth, dishonor arms
 In hungry droves.

“ Their gun’s a burden on their shouther ;
 They downa bide the stink o’ powther ;
 Their bauldest thought’s a hank’ring swither
 To stan’ or rin,
 Till skelp—a shot—they’re aff, a’ throwther,
 To save their skin.

“ But bring a Scotsman frae his hill,
 Clap in his cheek a Highland gill,
 Say, such is Royal George’s will,
 An’ there’s the foe,
 He has nae thought but how to kill
 Twa at a blow.

“ Nae cauld, faint-hearted doubtings tease him ;
 Death comes, wi’ fearless eye he sees him ;
 Wi’ bluidy hand a welcome gies him :
 An’ when he fa’s,
 His latest draught o’ breathin lea’es him
 In faint huzzas.”

These are not the sentiments of a man who “ takes an enemy into his mouth to steal away his brains.” Nor is there anything to condemn, when looked at in the light with which genius invests them, in the pictures presented to us in “ Scotch Drink,” of some of the familiar scenes of humble life, whether of busy work, or as busy recreation, and some of home-felt incidents interesting to all that live—such as “ when skirlin weanies see the light”—animated and invigorated to the utmost pitch of tension, beyond the reach of the jaded spirits of the laboring poor—so at least the poet makes us for the time willing to believe—when unaided by that elixir he so fervidly sings. Who would wish the following lines expunged ? Who may not, if he chooses, so qualify their meaning as to make them true ? Who will not pardon the first two, if they need pardon, for sake of the last two that need none ? For surely you, who though guilty of no

excess, fare sumptuously every day, will not find it in your hearts to grudge the “poor man’s wine” to the Cottar after that “Saturday Night” of his, painted for you to the life by his own son, Robert Burns!

“Thou clears the head o’ doited leir ;
 Thou cheers the heart o’ drooping care ;
 Thou strings the nerves o’ labor sair,
 At’s weary toil ;
 Thou brightens even dark despair
 Wi’ gloomy smile.

“Aft, clad in massy siller weed,
 Wi’ gentles thou erects thy head ;
 Yet humbly kind in time o’ need,
 The poor man’s wine ;
 His wee drap parritch, or his bread,
 Thou kitchens fine.”

Gilbert, in his excellent vindication of his brother’s character, tells us that at the time when many of those “Rhapsodies respecting drinking” were composed and first published, few people were less addicted to drinking than he; and that he assumed a poetical character, very different from that of the man at the time. It has been said that Scotsmen have no humor—no perception of humor—that we are all plain matter-of-fact people—not without some strength of understanding—but grave to a degree on occasions when races more favor’d by nature are gladsome to an excess: and—

“In gay delirium rob them of themselves.”

This judgment on our national characteristics implies a familiar acquaintance with Scottish poetry from Dunbar to Burns. It would be nearer the truth—though still wide of it—to affirm, that we have more humor than all the rest of the inhabitants of this earth besides; but this at least is true, that unfortunately for ourselves, we have too much humor, and that it has sometimes been allowed to flow out of its proper province, and mingle itself with thoughts and things that ought for ever to be kept sacred in the minds of the people. A few words by and by on this sub-

ject ; meanwhile, with respect to his "Rhapsodies about Drinking," Burns knew that not only had all the states, stages, and phases of inebriety been humorously illustrated by the comic genius of his country's most popular poet, but that the people themselves, in spite of their deep moral and religious conviction of the sinfulness of intemperance, were prone to look on its indulgences in every droll and ludicrous aspect they could assume, according to the infinite variety of the modifications of individual character. As a poet dealing with life as it lay before and around him, so far from seeking to avoid, he eagerly seized on these ; and having in the constitution of his own being as much humor and as rich as ever mixed with the higher elements of genius, he sometimes gave vent to its perceptions and emotions in strains perfectly irresistible—even to the most serious—who had to force themselves back into their habitual and better state, before they could regard them with due condemnation.

But humor in men of genius is always allied to pathos—its exquisite touches

“On the pale cheek of sorrow awaken a smile,
And illumine the eye that was dim with a tear.”

So is it a thousand times with the humor of Burns—and we have seen it so in our quotations from these very "Rhapsodies." He could sit with "rattling roarin' Willie"—and when he belonged to the Crochallan Fencibles, "he was the king of a' the core." But where he usually sat up late at night, during those glorious hard-working years, was a low loft above a stable—so low that he had to stoop even when he was sitting at a deal table three feet by two—with his "heart inditing a good matter" to a plough-boy, who *read it up* to the poet before they lay down on the same truckle-bed.

Burns had as deep an insight as ever man had into the moral evils of the poor man's character, condition, and life. From many of them he remained free to the last ; some he suffered late and early. What were his struggles we know, yet we know but in part, before he was overcome. But it does not appear that he thought intemperance the worst moral evil of the people,

or that to the habits it forms had chiefly to be imputed their falling short or away from that character enjoined by the law written and unwritten, and without which, preserved in its great lineaments, there cannot be to the poor man, any more than the rich, either power or peace. He believed that but for “Man’s inhumanity to man,” this might be a much better earth ; that they who live by the sweat of their brows would wipe them with pride, so that the blood did but freely circulate from their hearts ; that creatures endowed with a moral sense and discourse of reason would follow their dictates, in preference to all solicitations to enjoyment from those sources that flow to them in common with all things that have life, so that they were but allowed the rights and privileges of nature, and not made to bow down to a servitude inexorable as necessity, but imposed, as he thought, on their necks as a yoke by the very hands which Providence had kept free ;—believing all this, and nevertheless knowing and feeling, often in bitterness of heart and prostration of spirit, that there is far worse evil, because self-originating and self-inhabiting within the invisible world of every human soul, Burns had no reprobation to inflict on the lighter sins of the oppressed, in sight of the heavier ones of the oppressor ; and when he did look into his own heart and the hearts of his brethren in toil and in trouble, for those springs of misery which are for ever welling there, and need no external blasts or torrents to lift them from their beds till they overflow their banks, and inundate ruinously life’s securest pastures, he saw THE PASSIONS to which are given power and dominion for bliss or for bale—of them in his sweetest, loftiest inspirations, he sung as a poet all he felt as a man ; willing to let his fancy in lighter moods dally with inferior things and merry measures—even with the very meat and drink that sustains man who is but grass, and like the flower of the field flourisheth and is cut down, and raked away out of the sunshine into the shadow of the grave.

That Burns did not only not set himself to dissuade poor people from drinking, but that he indited “Rhapsodies” about “Scotch Drink,” and “Earnest Cries,” will not, then, seem at all surprising to poor people themselves, nor very culpable even in the eyes of the most sober among them ; whatever may be the light

in which some people regard such delinquencies, your more-in-sorrow-than-anger moralists, who are their own butlers, and sleep with the key of the wine-cellar under their pillow ; his poetry is very dear to the people, and we venture to say that they understand its spirit as well as the best of those for whom it was not written ; for written it was for his own Order—the enlightened majority of Christian men. No fear of their being blind to its venial faults, its more serious imperfections, and if there they be, its sins. There are austere eyes in work-shops, and in the fields, intolerant of pollution ; stern judges of themselves and others preside in those courts of conscience that are not open to the public ; nevertheless, they have tender hearts, and they yearn with exceeding love towards those of their brethren who have brightened or elevated their common lot. Latent virtues in such poetry as Burns's are continually revealing themselves to readers, whose condition is felt to be uncertain, and their happiness to fluctuate with it ; adversity puts to the test our opinions and beliefs, equally with our habits and our practices ; and the most moral and religious man that ever worked from morning to night, that his family might have bread—daily from youth upwards till now he is threescore and ten—might approve of the sentiment of that Song, feel it in all its fervor, and express it in all its glee, in which age meeting with age, and again hand and heart linked together, the “ trusty feres,” bring back the past in a sun-burst on the present, and thoughtless of the future, pour out unblamed libations to the days “ o' auld lang syne !”

It seems to us very doubtful if any poetry could become popular, of which the prevalent spirit is not in accordance with that of the people, as well in those qualities we grieve to call vices, as in those we are happy to pronounce virtues. It is not sufficient that they be moved for a time against their will, by some moral poet desirous, we shall suppose, of purifying and elevating their character, by the circulation of better sentiments than those with which they have been long familiar ; it is necessary that the will shall go along with their sympathies to preserve them perhaps from being turned into antipathies ; and that is not likely to happen, if violence be done to long-established customs

and habits, which may have acquired not only the force, but something too of the sanctity, of nature.

But it is certain that to effect any happy change in the manners or the morals of a people—to be in any degree instrumental to the attainment or preservation of their dearest interests—a Poet must deal with them in the spirit of truth ; and that he may do so, he must not only be conversant with their condition, but wise in knowledge, that he may understand what he sees, and whence it springs—the evil and the good. Without it, he can never help to remove a curse or establish a blessing ; for a while his denunciations or his praises may seem to be working wonders—his genius may be extolled to the skies—and himself ranked among the benefactors of his people ; but yet a little while, and it is seen that the miracle has not been wrought, the evil spirit has not been exorcised ; the plague-spot is still on the bosom of his unhealed country ; and the physician sinks away unobserved among men who have not taken a degree.

Look, for example, at the fate of that once fashionable, for we can hardly call it popular, tale—“Scotland’s Skaith, or the History of Will and Jean,” with its Supplement, “The Waes o’ War.” Hector Macneil had taste and feeling—even genius—and will be remembered among Scottish poets.

“ Robin Burns, in mony a ditty,
Loudly sings in whisky’s praise ;
Sweet his sang ! the mair’s the pity
E’er on it he war’d sic lays.

“ O’ a’ the iils poor Caledonia
E’er yet pree’d, or e’er will taste,
Brew’d in hell’s black Pandemonia—
Whisky’s ill will skaith her maist.”

So said Hector Macneil of Robert Burns, in verse not quite so vigorous as the “Earnest Cry.” It would require a deeper voice to frighten the “drouthy” from “Scotch Drink,” if it be “brewed in hell.” “Impressed with the baneful consequences inseparable from an inordinate use of ardent spirits among the lower orders of society, and anxious to contribute something that might at least tend to retard the contagion of so

dangerous an evil, it was conceived, in the ardor of philanthropy, that a natural, pathetic story, in verse, calculated to enforce moral truths, in the language of simplicity and passion, might probably interest the uncorrupted ; and that a striking picture of the calamities incident to idle debauchery, contrasted with the blessings of industrious prosperity, might (although insufficient to reclaim abandoned vice) do something to strengthen and encourage endangered virtue. Visionary as these fond expectations may have been, it is pleasing to cherish the idea ; and if we may be allowed to draw favorable inferences from the sale of *ten thousand copies in the short space of five months*, why should we despair of success ?” The success, if we may trust to statistical tables, has, alas ! been small ; nor would it have been greater had a million copies been put into circulation. For the argument illustrated in the “History of Will and Jean” has no foundation in nature—and proceeds on an assumption grossly calumnious of the Scottish character. The following verses used once to ring in every ear :—

“ Wha was ance like Willie Garlace,
 Wha in neiboring town or farm ?
 Beauty’s bloom shone in his fair face,
 Deadly strength was in his arm ?

“ Wha wi’ Will could rin, or wrestle,
 Throw the sledge, or toss the bar ?
 Hap what would, he stood a castle,
 Or for safety or for war :

“ Warm his heart, and mild as manfu’,
 Wi’ the bauld he bauld wad be ;
 But to friends he had a handfu’,
 Purse and service aft were free.”

He marries Jeanie Millar, a wife worthy of him, and for three years they are good and happy in the blessing of God. What in a few months makes drunkards of them both ? He happens to go *once* for refreshment, after a long walk, into a way-side public house—and from that night he is a lost man. He is described as entering it on his way home from a Fair—and we never heard of a Fair where there was no whisky—drinks

Meg's ale or porter, and eats her bread and cheese without incurring much blame from his biographer ; but his companion prevails on him to taste "the widow's gill"—a thing this bold peasant seems never before to have heard of—and infatuated with the novel potion, Willie Garlace, after a few feeble struggles, in which he derives no support from his previous life of happiness, industry, sobriety, virtue, and religion, staggers to destruction. Jeanie, in despair, takes to drinking too ; they are "rouped out ;" she becomes a beggar, and he "a sodger." The verses run smoothly and rapidly, and there is both skill and power of narration, nor are touches of nature wanting, strokes of pathos that have drawn tears. But by what insidious witchcraft this frightful and fatal transformation was brought about, the uninspired story-teller gives no intimation—a few vulgar common-places constitute the whole of his philosophy—and he no more thinks of tracing the effects of whisky on the moral being—the heart—of poor Willie Garlace, than he would have thought of giving an account of the coats of his stomach, had he been poisoned to death by arsenic. "His hero" is not gradually changed into a beast, like the victims of Circe's enchantments ; but rather resembles the Cyclops all at once maddened in his cave by the craft of Ulysses. This is an outrage against nature ; not thus is the sting to be taken out of "Scotland's Scaith"—and a nation of drunkards to be changed into a nation of gentlemen. If no man be for a moment safe who "prees the widow's gill" the case is hopeless, and despair admits the inutility of Excise. In the "Waes o' War"—the Sequel of the story—Willie returns to Scotland with a pension and a wooden leg, and finds Jeanie with the children in a cottage given her by "the good Buccleugh." Both have become as sober as church-mice. The loss of a limb, and eight pounds a year for life, had effectually reformed the husband, a cottage and one pound a quarter the wife ; and *this* was good Hector Macneil's idea of a Moral Poem ! A poem that was not absolutely to stay the plague, but to fortify the constitution against it ; "and if we may be allowed to draw favorable inferences from the sale of ten thousand copies in the short space of five months, why should we despair of success ?"

It is not from such poetry that any healthful influence can be exhaled over the vitiated habits of a people;

“With other ministrations, thou, O Nature !
Healest thy wandering and distempered child ;”

had Burns written a Tale to exemplify a Curse, Nature would have told him of them all; nor would he have been in aught unfitted by the experiences that prompted many a genial and festive strain, but, on the contrary, the better qualified to give in “thoughts that breathe and words that burn,” some solution of that appalling mystery, in which the souls of good men are often seen hurrying and hurried along paths they had long abhorred, and still abhor, as may be seen from their eyes, even when they are rejecting all offered means of salvation, human and divine, and have sold their bibles to buy death. Nor would Burns have adopted the vulgar libel on the British army, that it was a receptacle for drunken husbands who had deserted their wives and children. There have been many such recruits; but his martial, loyal, and patriotic spirit would ill have brooked the thought of such a disgrace to the service, in an ideal picture, which his genius was at liberty to color at its own will, and could have colored brightly according to truth. “One fine summer evening he was at the Inn at Brownhill with a couple of friends, when a poor way-worn soldier passed the window: of a sudden, it struck the poet to call him in, and get the story of his adventures; after listening to which, he all at once fell into one of those fits of abstraction, not unusual with him,” and perhaps, with the air of “*The mill, mill O*” in his heart, he composed “The Soldier’s Return.” It, too, speaks of the “waes of war;” and that poor way-worn soldier, we can well believe, had given no very flattering account of himself or his life, either before or after he had mounted the cockade. Why had he left Scotland and Mill-mannoch on the sweet banks of the Coyle near Coylton Kirk? Burns cared not why; he loved his kind, and above all, his own people; and his imagination immediately pictured a blissful meeting of long-parted lovers.

“I left the lines and tented field,
Where lang I’d been a lodger,

My humble knapsack a' my wealth,
A poor but honest sodger.

“ A right leal heart was in my breast,
A hand unstained wi' plunder,
And for fair Scotia hame again,
I cheery on did wander.
I thought upon the banks o' Coil,
I thought upon my Nancy,
I thought upon the witching smile,
That caught my youthful fancy.

“ At length I reached the bonnie glen,
Where early life I sported ;
I passed the mill, and trysting thorn,
Where Nancy oft I courted :
Wha spied I but my ain dear maid,
Down by my mother's dwelling !
And turned me round to hide the tear
That in my breast was swelling.”

The ballad is a very beautiful one, and throughout how true to nature ! It is alive all over Scotland ; that other is dead, or with suspended animation ; not because “ The Soldier's Return ” is a happy, and “ Will and Jean ” a miserable story ; for the people's heart is prone to pity, though their eyes are not much given to tears. But the people were told that “ Will and Jean ” had been written for their sakes, by a wise man made melancholy by the sight of their condition. The upper ranks were sorrowful exceedingly for the lower—all weeping over their wine for them over their whisky, and would not be comforted ! For Hector Macneil informs them that

“ Maggie's club, wha could get nae light
On some things that should be clear,
Fand ere long the fau't, and ae night
Clubb'd and gat the Gazetteer.”

The lower ranks read the Lamentation, for ever so many thousands were thrust into their hands ; but though not insensible of their own infirmities, and willing to confess them, they rose up in indignation against a charge that swept their firesides of all that was most sacredly cherished there, asked who wrote

"The Cottar's Saturday Night?" and declared with one voice, and a loud one, that if they were to be bettered by poems, it should be by the poems of their own Robert Burns.

And here we are brought to speak of those Satirical compositions which made Burns famous within the bounds of more than one Presbytery, before the world had heard his name. In boyhood and early youth he showed no symptoms of humor—he was no droll—dull even—from constitutional headaches, and heart-quakes, and mysteries not to be understood—no laughing face had he—the lovers of mirth saw none of its sparkles in his dark, melancholy looking eyes. In his autobiographical sketch he tells us of no funny or facetious "chap-books;" his earliest reading was of the "tender and the true," the serious or the sublime. But from the first he had been just as susceptible and as observant of the comic as of the tragic—nature had given him a genius as powerful over smiles as tears—but as the sacred source lies deepest, its first inspirations were drawn thence in abstraction and silence, and not till it felt some assurance of its diviner strength did it delight to disport itself among the ludicrous images that, in innumerable varieties of form and color—all representative of realities—may be seen, when we choose to look at them, mingling with the most solemn or pathetic shows that pass along in our dream of life. You remember his words, "Thus with me began Love and Poetry." True; they grew together; but for a long time they were almost silent—seldom broke out into song. His earliest love verses but poorly express his love—nature was then too strong within him for art which then was weak—and young passion, then pure but all-engrossing, was filling his whole soul with poetry that ere long was to find a tongue that would charm the world.

It was in the Humorous, the Comic, the Satirical, that he first tried and proved his strength. Exulting to find that a rush of words was ready at his will—that no sooner flashed his fancies than on the instant they were embodied, he wanton'd and revelled among the subjects that had always seemed to him the most risible, whatever might be the kind of laughter, simple or compound—pure mirth, or a mixture of mirth and contempt, even of indignation and scorn—mirth still being the chief ingredient that

qualified the whole—and these, as you know, were all included within the “Sanctimonious,” from which Burns believed the Sacred to be excluded; but there lay the danger, and there the blame if he transgressed the holy bounds.

His satires were unsparingly directed against certain ministers of the gospel, whose Calvinism he thought was not Christianity; whose characters were to him odious, their persons ridiculous, their manners in the pulpit irreverent, and out of it absurd; and having frequent opportunities of seeing and hearing them in all their glory, he made studies of them *con amore* on the spot, and at home from abundant materials with a master’s hand elaborated finished pictures—for some of them are no less—which, when hung out for public inspection in market-places, brought the originals before crowds of gazers transported into applause. Was this wicked? Wicked we think too strong a word; but we cannot say that it was not reprehensible, for to all sweeping satire there must be some exception—and exaggeration cannot be truth. Burns by his irregularities had incurred ecclesiastical censure, and it has not unfairly been said that personal spite barbed the sting of his satire. Yet we fear such censure had been but too lightly regarded by him; and we are disposed to think that his ridicule, however blameable on other grounds, was free from malignity, and that his genius for the comic rioted in the pleasure of sympathy and the pride of power. To those who regard the persons he thus satirized as truly belonging to the old Covenanters, and Saints of a more ancient time, such satires must seem shameful and sinful; to us who regard “Rumble John” and his brethren in no such light, they appear venial offences, and not so horrible as Hudibrastic. A good many years after Burns’s death, in our boyhood we sometimes saw and heard more than one of those worthies, and cannot think his descriptions greatly overcharged. We remember walking one day—unknown to us as a fast day—in the neighborhood of an ancient fortress, and hearing a noise to be likened to nothing imaginable on this earth but the bellowing of a buffalo fallen into a trap upon a tiger, which as we came within half a mile of the castle we discerned to be the voice of a pastor engaged in public prayer. His physiognomy was little less alarming than his voice, and his

sermon corresponded with his looks and his lungs—the whole being indeed an extraordinary exhibition of divine worship. We never can think it sinful that Burns should have been humorous on such a pulpiteer; and if we shudder at some of the verses in which he seems yet alive, it is not at the satirist.

“From this time, I began to be known in the country as a maker of rhymes. *Holy Willie's Prayer* next made its appearance, and alarmed the kirk-session so much, that they held several meetings to look over their spiritual artillery, and see if any of it might be pointed against profane rhymers;” “and to a place among *profane rhymers*,” says Mr. Lockhart, in his masterly volume, “the author of this *terrible infliction* had unquestionably established his right.” Sir Walter speaks of it as “a piece of satire *more exquisitely severe* than any which Burns ever afterwards wrote, *but unfortunately cast in a form too daringly profane* to be received into Dr. Currie's collection.” We have no wish to say one word in opposition to the sentence pronounced by such judges; but has Burns here *dared* beyond Milton, Goethe, and Byron? He puts a Prayer to the Almighty into the mouth of one whom he believes to be one of the lowest of blasphemers. In that Prayer are impious supplications couched in shocking terms, characteristic of the hypocrite who stands on a familiar footing with his Maker. Milton's blasphemer is a fallen angel, Goethe's a devil, Byron's the first murderer, and Burns's an elder of the kirk. All the four poets are alike guilty, or not guilty—unless there be in the case of one of them something peculiar that lifts him up above the rest, in the case of another something peculiar that leaves him alone a sinner. Let Milton then stand aloof, acquitted of the charge, not because of the grandeur and magnificence of his conception of Satan, but because its high significance cannot be misunderstood by the pious, and that out of the mouths of the dwellers in darkness, as well as of the Sons of the Morning “he vindicates the ways of God to man.” Byron's Cain blasphemes; does Byron? Many have thought so—for they saw, or seemed to see, in the character of the Cursed, as it glooms in soliloquies that are poetically sublime, some dark intention in its delineator to inspire doubts of the justice of the Almighty One who inhabiteth eternity. Goethe in

the "Prologue in Heaven" brings Mephistopheles face to face with God. But Goethe devoted many years to "his great poem, Faust," and in it he too, as many of the wise and good believe, strove to show rising out of the blackness of darkness the attributes of Him whose eyes are too pure to behold iniquity.. Be it even so ; then, why blame Burns ? You cannot justly do so, on account of the "daringly profane form" in which "Holy Willie's Prayer" is cast, without utterly reprobating the "Prologue in Heaven."

Of the *Holy Fair* few have spoken with any serious reprehension. Dr. Blair was so much taken with it that he suggested a well known emendation—and for our own part we have no hesitation in saying, that we see no reason to lament that it should have been written by the writer of the *Cottar's Saturday Night*. The title of the poem was no profane thought of his—it had arisen long before among the people themselves, and expressed the prevalent opinion respecting the use and wont that profaned the solemnization of the most awful of all religious rites. In many places, and in none more than in Mauchline, the administration of the Sacrament was hedged round about by the self-same practices that mark the character and make the enjoyment of a Rural Fair-day. Nobody doubts that in the midst of them all sat hundreds of pious people whose whole hearts and souls were in the divine service. Nobody doubts that even among those who took part in the open or hardly concealed indecencies which custom could never make harmless, though it made many insensible to their grossness, not a few were now and then visited with devout thoughts ; nay, that some, in spite of their improprieties, which fell off from them unawares, or were by an act of pious volition dismissed, were privileged to partake of the communion elements. Nobody supposes that the heart of such an assemblage was to be judged from its outside—that there was no composed depth beneath that restless surface. But everybody knows that there was fatal desecration of the spirit that should have *reigned* there, and that the thoughts of this world were paramount at a time and place set apart, under sanctions and denunciations the most awful, to the remembrance of Him who purchased for us the kingdom of Heaven.

We believe, then, that Burns was not guilty in this poem of any intentional irreverence toward the public ordinances of religion. It does not, in our opinion, afford any reason for supposing that he was among the number of those who regard such ordinances as of little or no avail, because they do not always exemplify the reverence which becomes men in the act of communing with their God. Such is the constitution of human nature that there are too many moments in the very article of these solemn occasions when the hearts of men are a prey to all their wonted cares and follies; and this short-coming in the whole solemnity robs it to many a delicate and well-disposed, but not thoroughly instructed imagination, of all attraction. But there must be a worship by communities as well as by individuals; for in the regards of Providence, communities appear to have a personality as well as individuals; and how shall the worship of communities be conducted, but by forms and ceremonies, which as they occur at stated times, whatever be the present frame of men's minds, must be often gone through with coldness. If those persons would duly consider the necessity of such ordinances, and their use in the conservation of religion, they would hold them sacred, in spite of the levity and hypocrisy that too often accompany their observance, nor would they wonder to see among the worshippers an unsuspected attention to the things of this world. But there was far more than this in the desecration which called for "the Holy Fair" from Burns. A divine ordinance had through unhallowed custom been overlaid by abuses, if not to the extinction, assuredly to the suppression, in numerous communicants, of the religious spirit essential to its efficacy; and in that fact we have to look for a defence of the audacity of his sarcasm; we are to believe that the Poet felt strong in the possession of a reverence far greater than that which he beheld, and in the conviction that nothing which he treated with levity could be otherwise than displeasing in the eye of God. We are far from seeking to place him, on this occasion, by the side of those men who, "strong in hatred of idolatry," become religious reformers, and while purifying Faith, unsparingly shattered Forms, not without violence to the cherished emotions of many pious hearts. Yet their wit too was often

aimed at faulty things standing in close connection with solemnities which wit cannot approach without danger. Could such scenes as those against which Burns directed the battery of his ridicule be *endured now?* Would they not be felt to be most profane? And may we not attribute the change in some measure to the Comic Muse?

Burns did not need to have subjects for poetry pointed out and enumerated to him, latent or patent in Scottish Life, as was considerately done in a series of dullish verses by that excellent person, Mr. Telford, Civil Engineer. Why, it has been asked, did he not compose a Sacred Poem on the administration of the Sacrament of our Lord's Last Supper? The answer is—how could he with such scenes before his eyes? Was he to shut them, and to describe it as if such scenes were not? Was he to introduce them, and give us a poem of a mixed kind, faithful to the truth? From such profanation his genius was guarded by his sense of religion, which though defective was fervent, and not unaccompanied with awe. Observe in what he has written, how he keeps aloof from the Communion Table. Not for one moment does he in thought enter the doors of the House of God. There is a total separation between the outer scene and the inner sanctuary—the administration of the sacrament is removed out of all those desecrating circumstances, and left to the imagination of the religious mind—by his silence. Would a great painter have dared to give us a picture of it? Harvey has painted, simply and sublimely, a "Hill Sacrament." But there all is solemn in the light of expiring day; the peace that passeth all understanding reposes on the heads of all the communicants; and in a spot sheltered from the persecutor by the solitude of sympathizing nature, the humble and the contrite, in a ritual hallowed by their pious forefathers, draw near at his bidding to their Redeemer.

We must now return to Burns himself, but cannot allow him to leave Ellisland without dwelling for a little while longer on the happy life he led for three years and more on that pleasant farm. Now and then you hear him low-spirited in his letters, but generally cheerful; and though his affairs were not very prosperous, there was comfort in his household. There was

peace and plenty ; for Mrs. Burns was a good manager, and he was not a bad one ; and one way and another the family enjoyed an honest livelihood. The house had been decently furnished, the farm well stocked ; and they wanted nothing to satisfy their sober wishes. Three years after marriage, Burns, with his Jean at his side, writes to Mrs. Dunlap, "as fine a figure and face we can produce as any rank of life whatever ; rustic, native grace ; unaffected modesty, and unsullied purity ; nature's mother-wit, and the rudiments of taste ; a simplicity of soul, unsuspicuous of, because unacquainted with, the ways of a selfish, interested, disingenuous world ; and the dearest charm of all the rest, a yielding sweetness of disposition, and a generous warmth of heart, grateful for love on our part, and ardently glowing with a more than equal return ; these, with a healthy frame, a sound, vigorous constitution, which your higher ranks can scarcely ever hope to enjoy, are the charms of lovely woman in my humble walk of life." Josiah Walker, however, writing many years after, expresses his belief that Burns did not love his wife. "A discerning reader will perceive," says he, "that the letters in which he announces his marriage are written in that state, when the mind is pained by reflecting on an unwelcome step ; and finds relief to itself in seeking arguments to justify the deed, and lessen its disadvantages in the opinion of others. But the greater the change which the taste of Burns had undergone, and the more his hopes of pleasure must in consequence have been diminished, from rendering Miss Armour his only female companion, the more credit does he deserve for that rectitude of resolution, which prompted him to fulfil what he considered as an engagement, and to act as a necessary duty prescribed. We may be at the same time permitted to lament the necessity which he had thus incurred. A marriage, from a sentiment of duty, may by circumstances be rendered indispensable ; but as it is undeniably a duty, not to be accomplished by any temporary exertion, however great, but calling for a renewal of effort every year, every day, and every hour, it is putting the strength and constancy of our principles to the most severe and hazardous trial. Had Burns completed his marriage, before perceiving the interest which he had the power of creating in females, whose accomplishments of mind and manners

Jean could never hope to equal ; or had his duty and his pride permitted his alliance with one of that superior class, many of his subsequent deviations from sobriety and happiness might probably have been prevented. It was no fault of Mrs. Burns, that she was unable, from her education, to furnish what had grown, since the period of their first acquaintance, one of the poet's most exquisite enjoyments ; and if a daily vacuity of interest at home exhausted his patience, and led him abroad in quest of exercise for the activity of his mind, those who can place themselves in a similar situation will not be inclined to judge too severely of his error.” Mrs. Burns, you know, was alive when this philosophical stuff was published, and she lived for more than twenty years after it, as exemplary a widow as she had been a wife. Its gross indelicacy—say rather wanton insult to all the feelings of a woman, is abhorrent to all the feelings of a man and shows the monk. And we have quoted it now that you may see what vile liberties respectable libellers were long wont to take with Burns and all that belonged to him—because he was a Gauger. Who would have dared to write thus of the wife and widow of a—*Gentleman*—of one who was a *Lady*? Not Josiah Walker. Yet it passed for years unreproved—the “Life” which contains it still circulates, and seems to be in some repute—and Josiah Walker on another occasion is cited to the rescue by George Thomson as a champion and vindicator of the truth. The insolent eulogist dared to say that Robert Burns in marrying Jean Armour, “repaired seduction by the most precious sacrifice, short of life, which one human being can make to another !” To her, in express terms, he attributes her husband’s misfortunes and misdoings—to her who soothed his sorrows, forgave his sins, inspired his songs, cheered his hearth, blest his bed, educated his children, revered his memory, and held sacred his dust.

What do you think was, according to his biographer, the chief cause of the blameable life Burns led at Ellisland ? *He knew not what to do with himself!* “When not occupied in the fields, *his time must have hung heavy on his hands!*” Just picture to yourself Burns peevishly pacing the “half-parlor half-kitchen” floor, with his hands in his breeches pockets, tormenting his dull

brain to invent some employment by which he might be enabled to resist the temptation of going to bed in the forenoon in his clothes! But how is this? "When not occupied in the fields, his time must have hung heavy on his hands; *for we are not to infer*, from the literary eminence of Burns, that, like a person regularly trained to studious habits, he could render himself by study independent of society. *He could read and write* when occasion prompted; but he could not, like a professional scholar, become so interested in *a daily course of lettered industry, as to find company an interruption rather than a relief.*" We cheerfully admit that Burns was not engaged at Ellisland on a History of the World. He had not sufficient books. Besides, he had to ride, in good smuggling weather, two hundred miles a-week. But we cannot admit that "to banish dejection, *and to fill his vacant hours*, it is not surprising that he should have resorted to such associates as his new neighborhood, or the inns upon the road to Ayrshire, could afford; and if these happened to be of a low description, that his constant ambition to render himself an important and interesting figure in every society, made him suit his conduct and conversation to their taste." When not on duty, the Exciseman was to be found at home like other farmers, and when "not occupied in the fields" with farm-work, he might be seen playing with Sir William Wallace and other Scottish heroes in miniature, two or three pet sheep of the quadruped breed sharing in the vagaries of the bipeds; or striding along the Scaur with his Whangee rod in his fist, with which, had time hung heavy on his hands, he would have cracked the skull of old Chronos; or sitting on a divot-dyke with the ghost of Tam O' Shanter, Captain Henderson, and the Earl of Glencairn; or, so it is recorded, "on a rock projecting into the Nith (which we have looked for in vain) employed in angling, with a cap made of a fox's skin on his head, a loose great-coat fixed round him by a belt, from which depended an enormous Highland broadsword;" or with his legs under the fir, with the famous Black Bowl sending up a Scotch mist in which were visible the wigs of two orthodox English clergymen, "to whose tastes his constant ambition to render himself an important and interesting figure in every society, made him suit his conduct

and conversation ;”—in such situations might Josiah Walker have stumbled upon Burns, and perhaps met with his own friend, “a clergyman from the south of England, who, on his return, talked with rapture of his reception, and of all that he had seen and heard in the cottage of Ellisland,” or with Ramsay of Oughtertyre, who was delighted “with Burns’s *uxor Sabina qualis* and the poet’s modest mansion, so unlike the habitations of ordinary rustics,” the very evening the Bard suddenly bounced in upon us, and said as he entered, “I come, to use the words of Shakspeare, ‘*stewed in haste,*’” and in a little while, such was the force and versatility of his genius, he made the tears run down Mr. L——’s cheeks, albeit “unused to the poetic strain ;”—or who knows but the pedestrian might have found the poet engaged in religious exercises under the sylvan shade ? For did he not write to Mrs. Dunlop, “I own myself so little of a presbyterian, that I approve of set times and seasons of more than ordinary acts of devotion, for breaking in on that habitual routine of life and thought which is so apt to reduce our existence to a kind of instinct, or even sometimes, and with some minds, to a state very little superior to mere machinery. This day (New-Year-day morning), the first Sunday of May, a breezy blue-skyed noon, some time before the beginning, and a hoary morning and calm sunny day about the end of autumn ; these, time out of mind, have been with me a kind of holiday.” Finally, Josiah might have made his salaam to the Exciseman just as he was folding up that letter in which he says, “we know nothing, or next to nothing, of the substance or structure of our souls, so cannot account for those seeming caprices or whims, that one should be particularly pleased with this thing or struck with that, which, in minds of a different cast, makes no extraordinary impression. I have some favorite flowers in spring, among which are the mountain daisy, the harebell, the foxglove, the wild-brier rose, the budding birch, and the hoary hawthorn, that I view and hang over with particular delight. I never hear the loud solitary whistle of the curlew in a summer noon, or the wild mixing cadence of a troop of grey plovers, in an autumnal morning, without feeling an elevation of soul like the enthusiasm of devotion or poetry. Tell me, my dear friend, to what can all this be

owing? Are we a piece of machinery, which, like the Æolian harp, passive, takes the impression of the passing accident? Or do these workings argue something within us above the trodden clod? I own myself partial to such proofs of those awful and important realities—a God that made all things—man's immaterial and immortal nature—and a world of weal or wo beyond death and the grave."

Burns however found that an active gauger, with ten parishes to look after, could not be a successful farmer; and looking forward to promotion in the Excise, he gave up his lease, and on his appointment to another district removed into Dumfries. The greater part of his small capital had been sunk or scattered on the somewhat stony soil of Ellisland; but with his library and furniture—his wife and his children—his and their wearing apparel—a trifle in ready money—no debt—youth, health, and hope, and a salary of seventy pounds, he did not think himself poor. Such provision, he said, was luxury to what either he or his better-half had been born to—and the flitting from Ellisland, accompanied as it was with the regrets and respect of the neighborhood, displayed on the whole a cheerful cavalcade.

It is remarked by Mr. Lockhart that Burns's "four principal biographers, Heron, Currie, Walker and Irving, concur in the general statement that his moral course, from the time that he settled in Dumfries, was downwards." Mr. Lockhart has shown that they have one and all committed many serious errors in this "general statement," and we too shall examine it before we conclude. Meanwhile let us direct our attention, not to his "moral course," but to the course of his genius. It continued to burn bright as ever, and if the character of the man corresponded in its main features with that of the poet, which we believe it did, its best vindication will be found in a right understanding of the spirit that animated his genius to the last, and gave birth to perhaps its finest effusions—**HIS MATCHLESS SONGS.**

In his earliest Journal, we find this beautiful passage:—

"There is a noble sublimity, a heart-melting tenderness, in some of our ancient ballads, which show them to be the work of a masterly hand: and it has often given me many a heart-ache to reflect, that such glorious old bards—bards who very proba-

bly owed all their talents to native genius, yet have described the exploits of heroes, the pangs of disappointment, and the meltings of love, with such fine strokes of nature—that their very names (O how mortifying to a bard's vanity !) are now ‘buried among the wreck of things which were.’ O ye illustrious names unknown! who could feel so strongly and describe so well; the last, the meanest of the Muse's train—one who, though far inferior to your flights, yet eyes your path, and with trembling wing would sometimes soar after you—a poor rustic bard, unknown, pays this sympathetic pang to your memory! Some of you tell us, with all the charms of verse, that you have been unfortunate in the world—unfortunate in love; he too has felt the loss of his little fortune, the loss of friends, and, worse than all, the loss of the woman he adored. Like you, all his consolation was his muse. She taught him in rustic measures to complain. Happy could he have done it with your strength of imagination and flow of verse! May the turf lie lightly on your bones! and may you now enjoy that solace and rest which this world rarely gives to the heart tuned to all the feelings of poesy and love.”

The old nameless song-writers, buried centuries ago in the kirk-yards that have themselves perhaps ceased to exist—yet one sees sometimes lonesome burial-places among the hills, where man's dust continues to be deposited after the house of God has been removed elsewhere—the old nameless song-writers took hold out of their stored hearts of some single thought or remembrance surpassingly sweet at the moment over all others, and instantly words as sweet had being, and breathed themselves forth along with some accordant melody of the still more olden time;—or when musical and poetical genius happily met together, both alike passion-inspired, then was born another new tune or air soon treasured within a thousand maidens' hearts, and soon flowing from lips that “murmured near the living brooks a music sweeter than their own.” Had boy or virgin faded away in untimely death, and the green mound that covered them, by the working of some secret power far within the heart, suddenly risen to fancy's eye, and then as suddenly sunk away into oblivion with all the wavering burial-place? Then was

framed dirge, hymn, elegy, that long after the mourned and the mourner were forgotten, continued to wail and lament up and down all the vales of Scotland—for what vale is unvisited by sorrow—in one same monotonous melancholy air, varied only as each separate singer had her heart touched, and her face saddened, with a fainter or stronger shade of pity or grief! Had some great battle been lost and won, and to the shepherd on the braes had a faint and far-off sound seemed on a sudden to touch the horizon like the echo of a trumpet? Then had some ballad its birth, heroic yet with dying falls, for the singer wept, even as his heart burned within him, over the princely head prostrated with all its plumes, haply near the lowly woodsman, whose horn had often startled the deer as together they trod the forest-chase, lying humble in death by his young lord's feet!—O, blue-eyed maiden, even more beloved than beautiful! how couldst thou ever find heart to desert thy minstrel, who for thy sake would have died without one sigh given to the disappearing happiness of sky and earth—and, witched by some evil spell, how couldst thou follow an outlaw to foreign lands, to find, alas! some day a burial in the great deep? Thus was enchain'd in sounds the complaint of disappointed, defrauded, and despairing passion, and another air filled the eyes of our Scottish maidens with a new luxury of tears—a low flat tune, surcharged throughout with one groan-like sigh, and acknowledged, even by the gayest heart, to be indeed the language of an incurable grief!—Or flashed the lover's raptured hour across the brain—yet an hour, in all its rapture, calm as the summer sea—or the level summit of a far flushing forest asleep in sunshine, when there is not a breath in heaven? Then thoughts that breathe, and words that burn—and, in that wedded verse and music you feel that “love is heaven, and heaven is love!” But affection, sober, sedate, and solemn, has its sudden and strong inspirations; sudden and strong as those of the wildest and most fiery passion. Hence the old grey-haired poet and musician, sitting haply blind in shade or sunshine, and bethinking him of the days of his youth, while the leading hand of his aged Alice gently touches his arm, and that voice of hers that once linted like the linnet, is now like that of the dove in its

lonely tree, mourns not for the past, but gladdens in the present, and sings a holy song—like one of the songs of Zion—for both trust that, ere the sun brings another summer, their feet will be wandering by the waters of eternal life.

Thus haply might arise verse and air of Scotland's old pathetic melodies. And how her light and airy measures?

Streaks of sunshine come dancing down from heaven on the darkest days to bless and beautify the life of poverty dwelling in the wilderness. Labor, as he goes forth at morn from his rustic lodge, feels, to the small bird's twitter, his whole being filled with joy; and, as he quickens his pace to field or wood, breaks into a song. Care is not always his black companion, but oft, at evening hour—while innocence lingers half-afraid behind, yet still follows with thoughtful footsteps—Mirth leads him to the circular seat beneath the tree, among whose exterior branches swings, creaking to and fro in the wind, the signboard teaching friendship by the close grasp of two emblematical hands. And thence the catch and troll, while “laughter holding both his sides” sheds tears to song and ballad pathetic on the woes of married life, and all the ills that “our flesh is heir to.”—Fair, Rocking, and Harvest-home, and a hundred rural festivals, are for ever giving wings to the flight of the circling year; or how could this lazy earth ever in so short a time whirl, spinning asleep on her axis, round that most attractive but distant sun? How loud, broad, deep, soul-and-body-shaking is the ploughman's or the shepherd's mirth, as a hundred bold sun-burnt visages make the rafters of the old hostel ring! Overhead the thunder of the time-keeping dance, and all the joyous tenement alive with love! The pathetic song, by genius steeped in tears, is forgotten; roars of boorish laughter reward the fearless singer for the ballad that brings burning blushes on every female face, till the snooded head can scarcely be lifted up again to meet the free kiss of affection bold in the privileges of the festival, where bashfulness is out of season, and the chairest maid withholds not the harmless boon only half granted beneath the milk-white thorn. It seems as if all the profounder interests of life were destroyed, or had never existed. In moods like these, genius plays with grief, and sports with sorrow. Broad farce

shakes hands with deep tragedy. Vice seems almost to be virtue's sister. The names and the natures of things are changed, and all that is most holy, and most holily cherished by us strange mortal creatures—for which thousands of men and women have died at the stake, and would die again rather than forfeit it—virgin love, and nuptial faith, and religion itself that saves us from being but as the beasts that perish, and equalizes us with the angels that live for ever—all become for a time seeming objects of scoff, derision, and merriment. But it is not so, as God is in heaven it is not so ; there has been a flutter of strange dancing lights on life's surface, but that is all, its depths have remained undisturbed in the poor man's nature ; and how deep these are you may easily know by looking, in an hour or two, through that small shining pane, the only one in the hut, and beholding and hearing him, his wife and children, on their knees in prayer—(how beautiful in devotion that same maiden now !) not unseen by the eye of Him who, sitting in the heaven of heavens, doth make our earth his footstool.

And thus the many broad-mirth songs, and tales, and ballads arose, that enliven Scotland's antique minstrelsy.

To Burns's ear all these lowly lays were familiar, and most dear were they all to his heart : nor less so the airs in which they have as it were been so long embalmed, and will be imperishable, unless some fatal change should ever be wrought in the manners of our people. From the first hour, and indeed long before it, that he composed his rudest verse, often had he sung aloud “old songs that are the music of the heart ;” and some day or other to be able himself to breathe such strains, had been his dearest, his highest ambition. His “genius and his moral frame” were thus imbued with the spirit of our old traditional ballad poetry ; and as soon as all his manifold passions were ripe, and his whole glorious being in full maturity, the voice of song was on all occasions of deepest and tenderest human interest, the voice of his daily, his nightly speech. He wooed each maiden in song that will, as long as our Doric dialect is breathed by love in beauty's ears, be murmured close to the cheek of Innocence trembling in the arms of Passion. It was in some such dream of delight that, wandering all by himself to seek the

muse by some "trotting burn's meander," he found his face breathed upon by the wind, as it was turned toward the region of the setting sun; and in a moment it was as the pure breath of his beloved, and he exclaimed to the conscious stars,

" Of a' the airts the wind can blaw,
I dearly like the west;
For there the bonny lassie lives,
The lass that I lo'e best!"

How different, yet how congenial to that other strain, which ends like the last sound of a funeral bell, when the aged have been buried :

" We'll sleep thegither at the foot,
John Anderson, my joe!"

These old songs were his models, because they were models of certain forms of feeling having a necessary and eternal existence. Feel as those who breathed them felt, and if you utter your feelings, the utterance is song. Burns did feel as they felt, and looked with the same eyes on the same objects. So entirely was their language his language, that all the beautiful lines, and half lines, and single words, that, because of something in them more exquisitely true to nature, had survived all the rest of the compositions to which they had long ago belonged, were sometimes adopted by him, almost unconsciously it might seem, in his finest inspirations; and oftener still sounded in his ear like a key-note, on which he pitched his own plaintive tune of the heart, till the voice and language of the old and new days were but as one; and the maiden who sung to herself the song by her wheel, or on the brae, quite lost in a wavering world of phantasy, could not, as she smiled, choose but also weep!

So far from detracting from the originality of his lyrics, this impulse to composition greatly increased it, while it gave to them a more touching character than perhaps ever could have belonged to them, had they not breathed at all of antiquity. Old but not obsolete, a word familiar to the lips of human beings who lived ages ago, but tinged with a slight shade of strangeness as

it flows from our own, connects the speaker, or the singer, in a way, though "mournful, yet pleasant to the soul," with past generations, and awakens a love at once more tender and more imaginative towards "auld Scotland." We think, even at times when thus excited, of other Burnses who died without their fame; and, glorying in him and his name, we love his poetry the more deeply for the sake of him whose genius has given our native land a new title of honor among the nations. Assuredly Burns is felt to be a Scotchman *intus et in cuto* in all his poetry; but not more even in his "Tam o'Shanter" and "Cottar's Saturday night," his two longest and most elaborate compositions, than in one and all of his innumerable and inimitable songs, from "Daintie Davie," to "Thou lingering star." We know too that the composition of songs was to him a perfect happiness that continued to the close of life—an inspiration that shot its light and heat, it may be said, within the very borders of his grave.

In his "Common-place or Scrap Book, begun in April, 1783," there are many fine reflections on Song-writing, besides that exquisite invocation—showing how early Burns had studied it as an art. We have often heard some of his popular songs found fault with for their imperfect rhymes—so imperfect, indeed, as not to be called rhymes at all; and we acknowledge that we remember the time when we used reluctantly to yield a dissatisfied assent to such objections. Thus in "Highland Mary"—an impassioned strain of eight quatrains—strictly speaking there are no rhymes—*Montgomery, drumlie*; *tarry, Mary*; *blossom, bosom*; *dearie, Mary*; *tender, asunder*; *early, Mary*; *fondly, kindly*; *dearly, Mary*. It is not enough to say that here, and in other instances, Burns was imitating the manner of some of the old songs—indulging in the same license; for he would not have done so, had he thought it an imperfection. He felt that there must be a reason in nature why this was sometimes so pleasing—why it sometimes gave a grace beyond the reach of art. Those minnesingers had all musical ears, and were right in believing them. Their ears told them that such words as these—meeting on their tympana under the modifying influence of tune, were virtually rhymes; and as such they "slid into

their souls." "There is," says Burns in a passage unaccountably omitted by Currie, and first given by Cromeck—"a great irregularity in the old Scotch songs—a redundancy of syllables with respect to that exactness of accent and measure that the English poetry requires—but which glides in most melodiously with the respective tunes to which they are set. For instance, the fine old song of *The mill, mill O*—to give it a plain prosaic reading—it halts prodigiously out of measure. On the other hand, the song set to the same tune in Bremner's Collection of Scotch songs, which begins, *To Fanny fair could I impart, &c.*—it is most exact measure; and yet, let them both be sung before a real critic, one above the biases of prejudice, but a thorough judge of nature, how flat and spiritless will the last appear, how trite and lamely methodical, compared with the wild, warbling cadence—the heart-moving melody of the first. This is particularly the case with all those airs which end with a hypermetrical syllable. There is a degree of wild irregularity in many of the compositions and fragments which are daily sung to them by my compeers—the common people—a certain happy arrangement of old Scotch syllables, and yet very frequently nothing—not even *like rhyme*—or sameness of jingle, at the end of the lines. This has made me sometimes imagine that perhaps it might be possible for a Scotch poet, with a nice judicious ear, to set compositions to many of our most favorite airs—particularly the class of them mentioned above—*independent of rhyme altogether.*"

It is a common mistake to suppose that the world is indebted for most of Burns's songs to George Thomson. He contributed to that gentleman sixty original songs, and a noble contribution it was; besides hints, suggestions, emendations, and restorations innumerable; but three times as many were written by him, emended or restored, for Johnson's SCOTS' MUSICAL MUSEUM. He began to send songs to Johnson, with whom he had become intimately acquainted on his first visit to Edinburgh, early in 1787, and continued to send them till within a few days of his death. In November, 1788, he says to Johnson, "I can easily see, my dear friend, that you will probably have four volumes. Perhaps you may not find your account lucratively in this business; but you are a patriot for the music of your country, and I

am certain posterity will look on themselves as highly indebted to your public spirit. Be not in a hurry ; let us go on correctly, and your name will be immortal.” On the 4th of July, 1796—he died on the 21st—he writes from Dumfries to the worthy music-seller in Edinburgh : “ How are you, my dear friend, and how comes on your fifth volume ? You may probably think that for some time past I have neglected you and your work ; but, alas ! the hand of pain, sorrow, and care, has these many months lain heavy on me. Personal and domestic affliction have almost entirely banished that alacrity and life with which I used to woo the rural muse of Scotia. You are a good, worthy, honest fellow, and have a good right to live in this world—because you deserve it. Many a merry meeting the publication has given us, and possibly it may give us more, though, alas ! I fear it. This protracting, slow, consuming illness which hangs over me, will, I doubt much, my ever dear friend, arrest my sun before he has well reached his middle career, and will turn over the poet to far more important concerns than studying the brilliancy of wit, or the pathos of sentiment. However, *hope* is the cordial of the human heart, and I endeavor to cherish it as well as I can. Let me hear from you as soon as convenient. Your work is a great one, and now that it is finished, I see, if I were to begin again, two or three things that might be mended.; yet I will venture to prophesy, that to future ages your publication will be the text-book and standard of Scottish song and music. I am ashamed to ask another favor of you, because you have been so very good already ; but my wife has a very particular friend of hers—a young lady who sings well—to whom she wishes to present the *Scots’ Musical Museum*. If you have a spare copy, will you be so obliging as to send it by the first *Fly*, as I am anxious to have it soon.”

Turn from James Johnson and his *Scots’ Musical Museum* for a moment to George Thomson and his Collection. In September, 1792, Mr. Thomson—who never personally knew Burns—tells him “ for some years past I have, with a friend or two, employed many leisure hours in selecting and collating the most favorite of our national melodies for publication ; ” and says—“ We will esteem your poetical assistance a particular favor ;

besides *paying any reasonable price* you shall please to demand for it." Burns, spurning the thought of being "paid any reasonable price," closes at once with the proposal, "as the request you make to me will positively add to my enjoyments in complying with it, I shall enter into your undertaking with all the small portion of abilities I have—strained to the utmost exertion by the impulse of enthusiasm." That enthusiasm for more than three years seldom languished—it was in his heart when his hand could hardly obey its bidding; and on the 12th of July, 1796—eight days after he had written, in the terms you have just seen, to James Johnson for a copy of his *Scots' Musical Museum*—he writes thus to George Thomson for five pounds. "After all my boasted independence, stern necessity compels me to implore you for five pounds. A cruel —— of a haberdasher, to whom I owe an account, taking it into his head that I am dying, has commenced a process, and will infallibly put me into jail. Do for God's sake send me that sum, and that by return of post. Forgive me this earnestness; but the horrors of a jail have made me half distracted. *I do not ask all this gratuitously; for upon returning health, I hereby promise and engage to furnish you with five pounds worth of the neatest song genius you have seen. FORGIVE ME, FORGIVE ME!*"

Mr. Johnson, no doubt, sent a copy of the Museum; but we do not know if the *Fly* arrived before the BIER. Mr. Thomson was prompt: and Dr. Currie, speaking of Burns's refusal to become a weekly contributor to the Poet's Corner in the Morning Chronicle, at a guinea a week, says, "Yet, he had for several years furnished, and was at that time furnishing, the *Museum* of Johnson, with his beautiful lyrics, without fee or reward, and was obstinately refusing all recompense for his assistance to the greater work of Mr. Thomson, which the justice and generosity of that gentleman was pressing upon him." That obstinacy gave way at last, not under the pressure of Mr. Thomson's generosity and justice, but under "the sense of his poverty, and of the approaching distress of his infant family which pressed," says Dr. Currie truly, "on Burns as he lay on the bed of death."

But we are anticipating; and desire at present to see Burns

"in glory and in joy." "Whenever I want to be more than ordinary *in song*; to be in some degree equal to your diviner airs, do you imagine I fast and pray for the celestial emanation? I have a glorious recipe; the very one that for his own use was invented by the divinity of healing and poetry, when erst he piped to the flocks of Admetus. I put myself on a regimen of admiring a fine woman; and in proportion to the admirability of her charms, in proportion you are delighted with my verses. The lightning of her eye is the godhead of Parnassus; and the witchery of her smile, the divinity of Helicon." We know the weak side of his character—the sin that most easily beset him—that did indeed "stain his name"—and made him for many seasons the prey of remorse. But though it is not allowed to genius to redeem—though it is falsely said, that "the light that leads astray is light from heaven"—and though Burns's transgressions must be judged as those of common men, and visited with the same moral reprobation—yet surely we may dismiss them with a sigh from our knowledge, for a while, as we feel the charm of the exquisite poetry originating in the inspiration of passion, purified by genius, and congenial with the utmost innocency of the virgin breast.

In his LOVE-SONGS, all that is best in his own being delights to bring itself into communion with all that is best in theirs whom he visions walking before him in beauty. That beauty is made "still more beauteous" in the light of his genius, and the passion it then moves partakes of the same ethereal color. If love inspired his poetry, poetry inspired his love, and not only inspired but elevated the whole nature of it. If the highest delights of his genius were in the conception and celebration of female loveliness, that trained sensibility was sure to produce extraordinary devotion to the ideal of that loveliness of which innocence is the very soul. If music refine the manners, how much more will it have that effect on him who studies its spirit, as Burns did that of the Scottish songs, in order to marry them to verse? "Until I am complete master of a tune in my own singing, such as it is, I can never compose for it. My way is this: I consider the poetic sentiment correspondent to my idea of the musical expression—then choose my theme—compose

one stanza. When that is composed, which is generally the most difficult part of the business, I walk out, sit down now and then, look out for objects in nature round me that are in unison or harmony with the cogitations of my fancy and workings of my bosom, humming every now and then the air, with the verses I have framed. When I feel my muse beginning to jade, I retire to the solitary fireside of my study, and there commit my effusions to paper ; swinging at intervals on the hind legs of my elbow chair, by way of calling forth my own critical strictures, as my pen goes. Seriously, this, at home, is almost invariably my way.” Then we know that his Bonnie Jean was generally in his presence, engaged in house affairs, while he was thus on his inspiring swing, that she was among the first to hear each new song recited by her husband, and the first to sing it to him, that he might know if it had been produced to live. He has said, that “musically speaking, conjugal love is an instrument of which the gamut is scanty and confined, but the tones inexpressibly sweet”—that Love, not so confined, “has powers equal to all the intellectual modulations of the human soul.” But did not those “tones inexpressibly sweet” often mingle themselves unawares to the Poet with those “intellectual modulations?” And had he not once loved Jean Armour to distraction? His first experiences of the passion of love, in its utmost sweetness and bitterness, had been for her sake, and the memories of those years came often of themselves unbidden into the very heart of his songs when his fancy was for the hour enamored of other beauties.

With a versatility, not compatible perhaps with a capacity of profoundest emotion, but in his case with extreme tenderness, he could instantly assume, and often on the slightest apparent impulse, some imagined character as completely as if it were his own, and realize its conditions. Or he could imagine himself out of all the circumstances by which his individual life was environed, and to all the emotions arising from that transmigration, give utterance as lively as the language inspired by his communion with his own familiar world. Even when he knew he was dying, he looked in Jessie Lewars’ face, whom he loved as a father loves his daughter, and that he might re-

ward her filial tenderness for him who was fast wearing away, by an immortal song, in his affection for her he feigned a hopeless passion, and imagined himself the victim of despair ;—

“Thou art sweet as the smile when fond lovers meet,
And soft as their parting tear—Jessy !
Although thou maun never be mine,
Although even hope is denied ;
’Tis sweeter for thee despairing,
Than aught in this world beside !”

It was said by one who during a long life kept saying weighty things—old Hobbes—that “in great differences of persons, the greater have often fallen in love with the meanner: but not contrary.” What Gilbert tells us of his brother might seem to corroborate that dictum—“His love rarely settled on persons who were higher than himself, or who had more consequence in life.” This, however, could only apply to the early part of his life. Then he had few opportunities of fixing his affections on persons above him; and if he had had, their first risings would have been suppressed by his pride. But his after destination so far levelled the inequality that it was not unnatural to address his devotion to ladies of high degree. He then felt that he could command their benevolence, if not inspire their love; and elated by that consciousness, he feared not to use towards them the language of love, of unbounded passion. He believed, and he was not deceived in the belief, that he could exalt them in their own esteem, by hanging round their proud necks the ornaments of his genius. Therefore, sometimes, he seemed to turn himself away disdainfully from sunburnt bosoms in homespun covering, to pay his vows and adorations to the Queens of Beauty. The devoirs of a poet, whose genius was at their service, have been acceptable to many a high-born dame and damsel, as the submission of a conqueror. Innate superiority made him, in these hours, absolutely unable to comprehend the spirit of society as produced by artificial distinctions, and at all times unwilling to submit to it or pay it homage. “Perfection whispered passing by, Behold the Lass o’ Ballochmyle !” and Burns, too proud to change himself into a lord or squire, imagined what happiness

might have been his if all those charms had budded and blown within a cottage like “a rose-tree in full bearing.”

“ O, had she been a country maid,
And I the happy country swain,
Tho’ sheltered in the lowest shed
That ever rose on Scotland’s plain !
Thro’ weary winter’s wind and rain,
With joy, with rapture, I would toil ;
And nightly to my bosom strain
The bonnie lass o’ Ballochmyle.”

He speaks less passionately of the charms of “ bonnie Lesley : as she gaed owre the border,” for they had not taken him by surprise ; he was prepared to behold a queen, and with his own hands he placed upon her head the crown.

“ To see her is to love her,
And love but her for ever ;
For Nature made her what she is,
And never made anither.

“ Thou art a queen, fair Lesley,
Thy subjects we, before thee :
Thou art divine, fair Lesley,
The hearts o’ men adore thee.”

Nay, evil spirits look in her face and almost become good—while angels love her for her likeness to themselves, and happy she must be on earth in the eye of heaven. We know not much about the “ Lovely Davis;” but in his stanzas she is the very Sovereign of Nature.

“ Each eye it cheers, when she appears,
Like Phœbus in the morning,
When past the shower, and every flower,
The garden is adorning.
As the wretch looks o’er Siberia’s shore,
When winter-bound the wave is ;
Sae droops our heart when we must part
Frae charming, lovely Davis.

“ Her smile’s a gift frae boon the lift
 That makes us mair than princes,
 A scepter’d hand, a king’s command,
 Is in her parting glances.
 The man in arms ’gainst female charms,
 Even he her willing slave is ;
 He hugs his chain, and owns the reign
 Of conquering, lovely Davis.”

The loveliest of one of the loveliest families in Scotland he changed into a lowly lassie, aye “ working her mammie’s work,” and her lover into Young Robie—“ who gaed wi’ Jeanie to the tryste, and danced wi’ Jeanie on the down.” In imagination he is still himself the happy man—his loves are short and rapturous as his lyrics—and while his constancy may be complained of, it is impossible to help admiring the richness of his genius that keeps for ever bringing fresh tribute to her whom he happens to adore.

“ Her voice is the voice of the morning,
 That wakes through the green-spreading grove
 When Phœbus peeps over the mountains,
 On music, and pleasure, and love.”

That was the voice of one altogether lovely—a lady elegant and accomplished—and adorning a higher condition than his own ; but though finer lines were never written, they are not finer than these four inspired by the passing by of a young woman, on the High Street of Dumfries, with her shoes and stockings in her hand, and her petticoats frugally yet liberally kilted to her knee.

“ Her yellow hair, beyond compare,
 Comes trinkling down her swan-white neck,
 And her two eyes, like stars in skies,
 Would keep a sinking ship frae wreck.”

It may be thought that such poetry is too high for the people—the common people—“ beyond the reaches of their souls ;” but Burns knew better—and he knew that he who would be their poet must put forth all his powers. There is not a single

thought, feeling, or image in all he ever wrote, that has not been comprehended in its full force by thousands and tens of thousands in the very humblest condition. They could not of themselves have conceived them—nor given utterance to anything resembling them to our ears. How dull of apprehension! how unlike gods! But let them be spoken to, and they hear. Their hearts delighted with a strange sweet music which by recognition they understand, are not satisfied with listening, but yearn to respond; and the whole land that for many years had seemed, but was not, silent, in a few months is overflowing with songs that had issued from highest genius it is true, but from the same source that is daily welling out its waters in every human breast. The songs that establish themselves among a people must indeed be simple—but the simplest feelings are the deepest, and once that they have received adequate expression, then they die not—but live for ever.

Many of his Love-songs are, as they ought to be, untinged with earthly desire, and some of these are about the most beautiful of any—as

“Wilt thou be my dearie?
 When sorrow wrings thy gentle heart,
 Wilt thou let me cheer thee!
 By the treasure of my soul,
 That’s the love I bear thee!
 I swear and vow, that only thou
 Shalt ever be my dearie.

“Lassie, say thou lo’es me;
 Or if thou wilt na be my ain,
 Say na thou’lt refuse me:
 Let me, lassie, quickly die,
 Trusting that thou lo’es me.
 Lassie, let me quickly die,
 Trusting that thou lo’es me.”

Nothing can be more exquisitely tender—passionless from the excess of passion—pure from very despair—love yet hopes for love’s confession, though it feels it can be but a word of pity to sweeten death.

In the most exquisite of his Songs, he connects and blends the

tenderest and most passionate emotions with all appearances—animate and inanimate ; in them all—and in some by a single touch—we are made to feel that we are in the midst of nature. A bird glints by, and we know we are in the woods—a primrose grows up, and we are among the braes—the mere name of a stream brings its banks before us—or two or three words leave us our own choice of many waters.

“ Far dearer to me the lone glen of green bracken,
Wi’ the burn stealing under the lang yellow broom.”

It has been thought that the eyes of “the laboring poor” are not very sensible—nay, that they are insensible to scenery—and that the pleasures thence derived are confined to persons of cultivated taste. True, that the country girl, as she “lifts her leglin, and hies her away,” is thinking more of her lover’s face and figure—whom she hopes to meet in the evening—than of the trysting tree, or of the holm where the grey hawthorn has been standing for hundreds of years. Yet she knows right well that they are beautiful ; and she feels their beauty in the old song she is singing to herself, that at dead of winter recalls the spring time and all the loveliness of the season of leaves. The people know little about painting—how should they ? for unacquainted with the laws of perspective, they cannot *see* the landscape-picture on which instructed eyes gaze till the imagination beholds a paradise. But the landscapes themselves they do see—and they love to look on them. The ploughman does so, as he “homeward plods his weary way ;” the reaper as he looks at what Burns calls his own light—“the reaper’s nightly beam, mild chequering through the trees.” If it were not so, why should they call it “Bonnie Scotland”—why should they call him “Sweet Robbie Burns ?”

In his Songs they think of the flowers as alive, and with hearts : “How blest the flowers that round thee bloom !” In his Songs, the birds they hear singing in common hours with common pleasure, or give them not a thought, without losing their own nature partake of theirs, and shun, share, or mock human passion. He is at once the most accurate and the most poetical

of ornithologists. By a felicitous epithet he characterizes each tribe according to song, plumage, habits, or haunts ; often introduces them for the sake of their own happy selves ; oftener as responsive to ours, in the expression of their own joys and griefs.

“ Oh, stay, sweet warbling wood-lark, stay,
Nor quit for me the trembling spray ;
A hapless lover courts thy lay—
Thy soothing, fond complaining.

“ Again, again, that tender part,
That I may catch thy melting art ;
For surely that wad touch her heart,
Wha kills me wi’ disdaining.

“ Say, was thy little mate unkind,
And heard thee as the careless wind ?
Oh, nocht but love and sorrow join’d,
Sic notes o’ love could wauken.

“ Thou tells o’ never ending care :
O’ speechless grief, and dark despair ;
For pity’s sake, sweet bird, nae mair,
Or my poor heart is broken !”

Who was Jenny Cruikshank ? Only child “of my worthy friend, Mr. William Cruikshank of the High School, Edinburgh.” Where did she live ? On a floor at the top of a *common stair*, now marked No. 30, in James’ Square. Burns lived for some time with her father—his room being one which has a window looking out from the gable of the house upon the green behind the Register Office. There was little on that green to look at—perhaps “a washing” laid out to dry. But the poet saw a vision—and many a maiden now often sees it too—whose face may be of the coarsest, and her hair not of the finest—but who in spite of all that, strange to say, has an imagination and a heart.

“ A rose-bud by my early walk
Adown a corn-enclosed bawk,
Sae gently bent its thorny stalk
All on a dewy morning ;

Ere twice the shades o' dawn are fled,
 In a' its crimson glory spread ;
 And drooping rich the dewy head,
 It scents the early morning.

“ Within the bush, her covert nest
 A little linnet fondly prest ;
 The dew sat chilly on her breast
 Sae early in the morning.
 The morn shall see her tender brood
 The pride, the pleasure o' the wood,
 Amang the fresh green leaves bedew'd,
 Awake the early morning.

“ So thou, dear bird, young Jeany fair !
 On trembling string, or vocal air,
 Shall sweetly pay the tender care,
 That tends thy early morning.
 So thou, sweet rosebud, young and gay,
 Shalt beauteous blaze upon the day,
 And bless the parent's evening ray,
 That watch'd thy early morning.”

Indeed, in all his poetry, what an overflowing of tenderness, pity, and affection towards all living creatures that inhabit the earth, the water, and the air ! Of all men that ever lived, Burns was the least of a sentimentalist ; he was your true Man of Feeling. He did not preach to Christian people the duty of humanity to animals ; he spoke of them in winning words warm from a manliest breast, as his fellow-creatures, and made us feel what we owe. What child could well be cruel to a helpless animal who had read “The Death and Dying Words of Poor Maillie”—or “The Twa Dogs?” “The Auld Farmer's New-year's-day Address to his Auld Mare Maggie” has—we know—humanized the heart of a Gilmerton carter. “Not a mouse stirring,” are gentle words at that hour from Shakspeare—when thinking of the ghost of a king ; and he would have loved brother Burns for saying—“What makes thee startle, at me thy poor earth-born companion *and fellow mortal!*” Safe-housed at fall of a stormy winter night, of whom does the poet think, along with the unfortunate, the erring, and the guilty of his own race ?

“ List’ning the doors an’ wInnocks rattle,
 I thought me on the ourie cattle,
 Or silly sheep, wha bide this brattle
 O’ winter war,
 An’ thro’ the drift, deep-lairing sprattle,
 Beneath a scar.

“ Ilk happing bird, wee, helpless thing,
 That in the merry months o’ spring
 Delighted me to hear thee sing,
 What comes o’ thee ?
 Whare wilt thou cow’r thy chittering wing,
 An’ close thy e’e ?”

The poet loved the sportsman ; but lamenting in fancy “ Tom Samson’s Death”—he could not help thinking, that “on his mouldering breast, some spitefu’ muirfowl bigs her nest.” When at Kirkoswald studying trigonometry, plane and spherical, he sometimes associated with smugglers, but never with poachers. You cannot figure to yourself young Robert Burns stealing stoopingly along under cover of a hedge, with a long gun and a lurcher, to get a shot at a hare sitting, and perhaps washing her face with her paws. No trumper ever “ coft fur” at Mossiel or Ellisland. He could have joined, had he liked, in the passionate ardor of the rod and the gun the net and the leister ; but he liked rather to think of all those creatures alive and well, “in their native element.” In his love-song to “the charming filette who overset his trigonometry,” and incapacitated him for the taking of the sun’s altitude, he says to her, on proposing to take a walk—

“ Now westlin winds, and slaught’ring guns,
 Bring autumn’s pleasant weather ;
 The moorcock springs, on whirring wings,
 Amang the blooming heather.

“ The partridge loves the fruitful fells ;
 The plover loves the mountains ;
 The woodcock haunts the lonely dells ;
 The soaring hern the fountains :
 Thro’ lofty groves the cushat roves,
 The path of man to shun it ;

The hazel bush o'erhangs the thrush,
The spreading thorn the linnet.

“ Thus ev’ry kind their pleasure find
The savage and the tender ;
Some social join, and leagues combine ;
Some solitary wander :
Avaunt, away ! the cruel sway,
Tyrannic man’s dominion ;
The sportsman’s joy, the murd’ring cry,
The flutt’ring, gory pinion !”

Bruar Water, in his Humble Petition to the Noble Duke of Athole, prays that his banks may be made sylvan, that shepherd, lover, and bard may enjoy the shades ; but chiefly for sake of the inferior creatures.

“ Delighted doubly then, my Lord,
You’ll wander on my banks,
And listen many a gratefu’ bird
Return you tunefu’ thanks.”

The sober laverock—the gowdspink gay—the strong blackbird—the clear lintwhite—the mavis mild and mellow—they will all sing “ God bless the Duke.” And one mute creature will be more thankful than all the rest—“ coward maukin sleep secure, low in her grassy form.” You know that he threatened to throw Jem Thomson, a farmer’s son near Ellisland, into the Nith, for shooting at a hare—and in several of his morning landscapes a hare is hirpling by. What human and poetical sympathy is there in his address to the startled wild fowl on Loch Turit ! He speaks of “ parent, filial, kindred ties ;” and in the closing lines who does not feel that it is *Burns* that speaks ?

“ Or, if man’s superior might,
Dare invade your native right,
On the lofty ether borne
Man with all his powers you scorn ;
Swiftly seek, on clang ing wings,
Other lakes and other springs ;
And the foe you cannot brave,
Scorn, at least, to be his slave.”

Whatever be his mood, grave or gladsome, mirthful or melancholy—or when sorrow smiles back to joy, or care joins hands with folly—he has always a thought to give to them who many think have no thought, but who all seemed to him, from highest to lowest in that scale of being, to possess each its appropriate degree of intelligence and love. In the “Sonnet written on his birth-day, January 25th, 1793, on hearing a thrush sing in a morning-walk,” it is truly affecting to hear how he connects, on the sudden, his own condition with all its cares and anxieties, with that of the cheerful bird upon the leafless bough—

“ Yet come, thou child of poverty and care,
The mite high Heaven bestows, that mite with thee I’ll share.”

We had intended to speak only of his Songs ; and to them we return for a few minutes more, asking you to notice how cheering such of them as deal gladsomely with the concerns of this world must be to the hearts of them who of their own accord sing them to themselves, at easier work, or intervals of labor, or at gloaming when the day’s darg is done. All partings are not sad—most are the reverse ; lovers do not fear that they shall surely die the day after they have kissed farewell ; on the contrary they trust, with the blessing of God, to be married at the term.

“ Jockey’s ta’en the parting kiss,
O’er the mountains he is gane ;
And with him is a’ my bliss,
Naught but griefs with me remain.

“ Spare my luve, ye winds that blaw,
Plashy sleetis and beating rain !
Spare my luve, thou feathery snaw,
Drifting o’er the frozen plain.

“ When the shades of evening creep
O’er the day’s fair, gladsome e’e,
Sound and safely may he sleep,
Sweetly blythe his waukening be !

“ He will think on her he loves,
Fondly he’ll repeat her name ;

For where'er he distant roves,
Jockey's heart is still at hame."

There is no great matter or merit, some one may say, in such lines as these—nor is there ; but they express sweetly enough some natural sentiments, and what more would you have in a song ? You have had far more in some songs to which we have given the go-by ; but we are speaking now of the class of the simply pleasant ; and on us their effect is like that of a gentle light falling on a pensive place, when there are no absolute clouds in the sky, and no sun visible either, but when that soft effusion, we know not whence, makes the whole day that had been somewhat sad, serene, and reminds us that it is summer. Believing you feel as we do, we do not fear to displease you by quoting "The Tither Morn."

" The tither morn, when I forlorn,
Aneath an aik sat moaning,
I didna trow, I'd see my jo,
Beside me, gain the gloaming.
But he sae trig, lap o'er the rig,
And dauntingly did cheer me,
When I, what reck, did least expec',
To see my lad so near me.

" His bonnet he, a thought ajee,
Cocked sprush when first he clasp'd me ;
And I, I wat, wi' fairness grat,
While in his grips he pressed me.
Deil take the war ! I late and air,
Hae wished syne Jock departed ;
But now as glad I'm wi' my lad,
As short syne broken-hearted.

" I'm aft at e'en wi' dancing keen,
When a' were blithe and merry,
I car'd na by, sae sad was I,
In absence o' my dearie.
But praise be blest, my mind's at rest,
I'm happy wi' my Johnny :
At kirk and fair, I'll aye be there,
And be as canty's ony."

We believe that the most beautiful of his Songs are dearest to the people, and these are the passionate and the pathetic ; but there are some connected in one way or other with the tender passion, great favorites too, from the light and lively, up to the humorous and comic—yet among the broadest of that class there is seldom any coarseness—indecency never—vulgar you may call some of them, if you please ; they were not intended to be *genteel*. Flirts and coquettes of both sexes are of every rank ; in humble life the saucy and scornful toss their heads full high, or “go by like stoure ;” “for sake o’ gowd she left me” is a complaint heard in all circles ; “although the night be neer sae wet, and he be neer sae weary O,” a gentleman of a certain age will make himself ridiculous by dropping on the knees of his corduroy breeches ; Auntie would fain become a mother, and in order thereunto a wife, and waylays a hobbletehoy ; daughters the most filial think nothing of breaking their mothers’ hearts as their grandmothers’ were broken before them ; innocents, with no other teaching but that of nature, in the conduct of intrigues in which verily there is neither shame nor sorrow, become systematic and consummate hypocrites, not worthy to live—single ; despairing swains are saved from suicide by peals of laughter from those for whom they fain would die, and so get noosed ;—and surely here is a field—indicated and no more—wide enough for the Scottish Comic Muse, and would you know how productive to the hand of genius you have but to read Burns.

In one of his letters he says, “If I could, and I believe I do it as far as I can, I would wipe away all tears from all eyes.” His nature was indeed humane ; and the tendernesses and kindnesses apparent in every page of his poetry, and most of all in his Songs—cannot but have a humanizing influence on all those classes exposed by the necessities of their condition to many causes for ever at work to harden or shut up the heart. Burns does not keep continually holding up to them the evils of their lot, continually calling on them to endure or to redress ; but while he stands up for his Order, its virtues, and its rights, and has bolts to hurl at the oppressor, his delight is to inspire contentment. In that solemn—“Dirge,”—a spiritual being, suddenly spied in the gloom, seems an Apparition, made sage by sufferings

in the flesh, sent to instruct us and all who breathe that "Man was made to mourn."

" Many and sharp the numerous ills
 Inwoven with our frame !
 More pointed still we make ourselves,
 Regret, remorse, and shame !
 And man, whose heaven-erected face
 The smiles of love adorn,
 Man's inhumanity to man,
 Makes countless thousands mourn !

" See yonder poor, o'er-labor'd wight,
 So abject, mean, and vile,
 Who begs a brother of the earth
 To give him leave to toil ;
 And see his lordly *fellow-worm*
 The poor petition spurn,
 Unmindful, tho' a weeping wife
 And helpless offspring mourn."

But we shall suppose that "brother of the earth" rotten, and forgotten by the "bold peasantry, their country's pride," who work without leave from worms. At his work we think we hear a stalwart tiller of the soil humming what must be a verse of Burns.

" Is there for honest poverty,
 That hangs his head, and a' that ?
 The coward slave, we pass him by,
 We dare be poor for a' that !
 What tho' on hamely fare we dine,
 Wear hoddin grey, and a' that ;
 Gie fools their silks, and knaves their wine,
 A man's a man for a' that.

" Then let us pray, that come it may,
 As come it will for a' that,
 That sense and worth, o'er a' the earth,
 May bear the gree, and a' that.
 For a' that, and a' that,
 It's coming yet for a' that,
 That man to man, the world o'er,
 Shall brothers be for a' that."

A spirit of Independence reigned alike in the Genius and the Character of Burns. And what is it but a strong sense of what is due to Worth, apart altogether from the distinctions of society—the vindication of that Worth being what he felt to be the most honored call upon himself in life ? That sense once violated is destroyed, and therefore he guarded it as a sacred thing—only less sacred than Conscience. Yet it belongs to Conscience, and is the prerogative of Man as Man. Sometimes it may seem as if he watched it with jealousy, and in jealousy there is always weakness, because there is fear. But it was not so ; he felt assured that his footing was firm and that his back was on a rock. No blast could blow, no air could beguile him from the position he had taken up with his whole soul in “ its pride of place.” His words were justified by his actions, and his actions truly told his thoughts ; his were a bold heart, a bold hand, and a bold tongue, for in the nobility of his nature he knew that though born and bred in a hovel, he was the equal of the highest in the land ; as he was—and no more—of the lowest, so that they too were MEN. For hear him speak—“ What signify the silly, idle gew-gaws of wealth, or the ideal trumpery of greatness ! When fellow-partakers of the same nature fear the same God, have the same benevolence of heart, the same nobleness of soul, the same detestation at everything dishonest, and the same scorn at everything unworthy—if they are not in the dependence of absolute beggary, in the name of common sense are they not EQUALS ? And if the bias, the instinctive bias of their souls were the same way, why may they not be FRIENDS ? He was indeed privileged to write that “ Inscription for an Altar to Independence.”

“ Thou of an independent mind,
With soul resolved, with soul resigned ;
Prepared Power’s proudest frown to brave,
Who wilt not be, nor have a slave ;
Virtue alone who dost revere,
Thy own reproach alone dost fear,
Approach this shrine, and worship here.”

Scotland’s adventurous sons are now as proud of this moral feature of his poetry as of all the pictures it contains of their native

country. Bound up in one volume it is the Manual of Independence. Were they not possessed of the same spirit, they would be ashamed to open it ; but what they wear they win, what they eat they earn, and if frugal they be—and that is the right word—it is that on their return they may build a house on the site of their father's hut, and proud to remember that he was poor, live so as to deserve the blessings of the children of them who walked with him to daily labor on what was then no better than a wilderness, but has now been made to blossom like the rose. Ebenezer Elliot is no flatterer—and he said to a hundred and twenty Scotsmen in Sheffield met to celebrate the birth-day of Burns—

“ Stern Mother of the deathless dead !
Where stands a Scot, a freeman stands ;
Self-stayed, if poor—self-clothed—self-fed ;
Mind-mighty in all lands.

“ No wicked plunder need thy sons,
To save the wretch whom mercy spurns,
No classic lore thy little ones,
Who find a Bard in Burns.

“ Their path tho' dark, they may not miss ;
Secure they tread on danger's brink ;
They say ' this shall be ' and it is :
For ere they act, they think.”

There are, it is true, some passages in his poetry, and more in his letters, in which this Spirit of Independence partakes too much of pride, and expresses itself in anger and scorn. These, however, were but passing moods, and he did not love to cherish them ; no great blame had they been more frequent and permanent—for his noble nature was exposed to many causes of such irritation, but it triumphed over them all. A few indignant flashes broke out against the littleness of the great ; but nothing so paltry as personal pique inspired him with feelings of hostility towards the highest orders. His was an imagination that clothed high rank with that dignity which some of the degenerate descendants of old houses had forgotten ; and whenever true noblemen “ reverenced the lyre ” and grasped the hand of the

peasant who had received it from nature as his patrimony, Burns felt it to be nowise inconsistent with the stubbornest independence that ever supported a son of the soil in his struggles with necessity, reverently to doff his bonnet, and bow his head in their presence with proud humility. Jeffrey did himself honor by acknowledging that he had been at first misled by occasional splenetic passages, in his estimation of Burns's character, and by afterwards joining, in eloquent terms, in the praise bestowed by other kindred spirits on the dignity of its independence. "It is observed," says Campbell with his usual felicity, "that he boasts too much of his independence; but in reality this boast is neither frequent nor obtrusive; and it is in itself the expression of a noble and laudable feeling. So far from calling up disagreeable recollections of rusticity, his sentiments triumph, by their natural energy, over those false and artificial distinctions which the mind is but too apt to form in allotting its sympathies to the sensibilities of the rich and poor. He carries us into the humble scenes of life, not to make us dole out our tribute of charitable compassion to paupers and cottagers, but to make us feel with them on equal terms, to make us enter into their passions and interests, and share our hearts with them as brothers and sisters of the human species."

In nothing else is the sincerity of his soul more apparent than in his Friendship. All who had ever been kind to him he loved till the last. It mattered not to him what was their rank or condition—he returned, and more than returned their affection—he was, with regard to such ties, indeed of the family of the faithful. The consciousness of his infinite superiority to the common race of men, and of his own fame and glory as a Poet, never for a moment made him forget the humble companions of his obscure life, or regard with a haughty eye any face that had ever worn towards him an expression of benevolence. The Smiths, the Muirs, the Browns, and the Parkers, were to him as the Aikens, the Ballantynes, the Hamiltons, the Cunninghams, and the Ainslies—these as the Stewarts, the Gregorys, the Blairs and the Mackenzies—these again as the Grahams and the Erskines—and these as the Daers, the Glencairns, and the other men of rank who were kind to him—all were his friends—his benefac-

tors. His heart expanded towards them all, and throbbed with gratitude. His eldest son—and he has much of his father's intellectual power—bears his own Christian name—the others are *James Glencairn*, and *William Nicol*—so called respectively after a nobleman to whom he thought he owed all—and a schoolmaster to whom he owed nothing—yet equally entitled to bestow—or receive that honor.

There is a beautiful passage in his Second Common Place Book, showing how deeply he felt, and how truly he valued, the patronage which the worthy alone can bestow. “What pleasure is in the power of the fortunate and happy, by their notice and patronage, to brighten the countenance and glad the heart of depressed worth! I am not so angry with mankind for their deaf economy of the purse. The goods of this world cannot be divided without being lessened; but why be a niggard of that which bestows bliss on a fellow creature, yet takes nothing from our own means of enjoyment? Why wrap ourselves in the cloak of our own better fortune, and turn away our eyes lest the wants and cares of our brother mortals should disturb the selfish apathy of our souls?” What was the amount of all the kindness shown him by the Earl of Glencairn? That excellent nobleman at once saw that he was a great genius,—gave him the hand of friendship—and in conjunction with Sir John Whiteford got the members of the Caledonian Hunt to subscribe for guinea instead of six shilling copies of his volume. That was all—and it was well. For that Burns was as grateful as for the preservation of life.

“The bridegroom may forget the bride
Was made his wedded wife yestreen;
The monarch may forget the crown
That on his head an hour hath been;
The mother may forget the child
That smiles sae sweetly on her knee;
But I'll remember thee, Glencairn,
And a' that thou hast done for me.”

He went into mourning on the death of his benefactor, and desired to know where he was to be buried, that he might attend the funeral, and drop a tear into his grave.

The “Lament for Glencairn” is one of the finest of Ele-

gies. We cannot agree with those critics—some of them of deserved reputation—who have objected to the form in which the poet chose to give expression to his grief. Imagination, touched by human sorrow, loves to idealize ; because thereby it purifies, elevates, and ennobles realities, without impairing the pathos belonging to them in nature. Many great poets—nor do we fear now to mention Milton among the number—have in such strains celebrated the beloved dead. They have gone out, along with the object of their desire, from the real living world in which they had been united, and shadowed forth in imagery that bears a high similitude to it, all that was most spiritual in the communion now broken in upon by the mystery of death. So it is in the Lycidas—and so it is in this “Lament.” Burns imagines an aged Bard giving vent to his sorrow for his noble master’s untimely death, among the “fading yellow woods, that wav’d o’er Lugar’s winding stream.” That name at once awakens in us the thought of his own dawning genius ; and though his head was yet dark as the raven’s wing, and “the locks were bleached white with time” of the Apparition evoked with his wailing harp among the “winds lamenting thro’ the caves,” yet we feel on the instant that the imaginary mourner is one and the same with the real—that the old and the young are inspired with the same passion, and have but one heart. We are taken out of the present time, and placed in one far remote—yet by such removal the personality of the poet, so far from being weakened, is enveloped in a melancholy light that shows it more endearingly to our eyes—the harp of other years sounds with the sorrow that never dies—the words heard are the everlasting language of affection—and is not the object of such lamentation aggrandized by thus being lifted into the domain of poetry ?

“I’ve seen sae mony changefu’ years,
 On earth I am a stranger grown ;
 I wander in the ways of men,
 Alike unknowing and unknown ;
 Unheard, unpitied, unreliev’d :
 I bear alane my lade o’ care,
 For silent, low, on beds of dust,
 Lie a’ that would my sorrows share.

“ And last (the sum of a’ my griefs !)
 My noble master lies in clay ;
THE FLOW’R AMANG OUR BARONS BOLD,
HIS COUNTRY’S PRIDE, HIS COUNTRY’S STAY.”

We go along with such a mourner in his exaltation of the character of the mourned—great must have been the goodness to generate such gratitude—that which would have been felt to be exaggeration, if expressed in a form not thus imaginative, is here brought within our unquestioning sympathy—and we are prepared to return to the event in its reality, with undiminished fervor, when Burns re-appears in his own character without any disguise, and exclaims—

“ Awake thy last sad voice, my harp,
 The voice of wo and wild despair ;
 Awake, resound thy latest lay,
 Then sleep in silence evermair !
 And thou, my last, best, only friend,
 That fillest an untimely tomb,
 Accept this tribute from the bard
 Thou brought from fortune’s mirkest gloom.

“ In poverty’s low, barren vale,
 Thick mists, obscure, involv’d me round ;
 Though oft I turned the wistful eye,
 Nae ray of fame was to be found :
 Thou found’st me, like the morning sun,
 That melts the fogs in limpid air,
 The friendless bard and rustic song
 Became alike thy fostering care.”

The Elegy on “ Captain Matthew Henderson”—of whom little or nothing is now known—is a wonderfully fine flight of imagination, but it wants, we think, the deep feeling of the “ Lament.” It may be called a Rapture. Burns says, “ It is a tribute to a man I loved much ;” and in “ The Epitaph ” which follows it, he draws his character—and a noble one it is—in many points resembling his own. With the exception of the opening and concluding stanzas, the Elegy consists entirely of a supplication to Nature to join with him in lamenting the death of the “ ae best fellow e’er was born ;” and though to our ears

there is something grating in that term, yet the disagreeableness of it is done away by the words immediately following :

“ Thee, Matthew, Nature’s sel’ shall mourn,
By wood and wild,
Where, haply, pity strays forlorn,
By man exil’d.”

The poet is no sooner on the wing, than he rejoices in his strength of pinion, and with equal ease soars and stoops. We know not where to look, in the whole range of poetry, for an Invocation to the great and fair objects of the external world, so rich and various in imagery, and throughout so sustained ; and here again we do not fear to refer to the Lycidas—and to say that Robert Burns will stand a comparison with John Milton.

“ But oh, the heavy change, now thou art gone,
Now thou art gone, and never must return !
Thee, Shepherd, thee the woods, and desert caves,
With wild thyme, and the gadding vine o’ergrown,
And all their echoes mourn :
The willows and the hazel copses green
Shall now no more be seen,
Fanning their joyous leaves to thy soft lays.
As killing as the canker to the rose,
Or taint-worm to the weanling herds that graze,
Or frost to flowers, that their gay wardrobe wear,
When first the white-thorn blows ;
Such, Lycidas, thy loss to shepherd’s ear.

* * * * *

* * * * Return, Sicilian Muse,
And call the vales, and bid them hither cast
Their bells and flowerets of a thousand hues,
Ye valleys low, where the mild whispers use
Of shades, and wanton winds, and gushing brooks,
On whose fresh lap the swart-star sparingly looks,
Throw hither all your quaint enamell’d eyes,
That on the green turf suck the honied showers,
And purple all the ground with vernal flowers.
Bring the rath primrose that forsaken dies,
The tufted crow-toe, and pale jessamine,
The white pink, and the pansy freak’d with jet,
The growing violet,
The musk-rose, and the well-attired woodbine,

With cowslips wan that hang the pensive head,
 And every flower that sad embroidery wears :
 Bid amaranthus all his beauty shed,
 And daffodillies fill their cups with tears,
 To strew the Laureat herse where Lycid lies.”

All who know the “Lycidas,” know how impossible it is to detach any one single passage from the rest, without marring its beauty of relationship—without depriving it of the charm consisting in the rise and fall—the undulation—in which the whole divine poem now gently and now magnificently fluctuates. But even when thus detached, the poetry of these passages is exquisite—the expression is perfect—consummate art has crowned the conceptions of inspired genius—and shall we dare set by their side stanzas written by a ploughman? We shall. But first hear Wordsworth. In the Excursion, the Pedlar says—and the Exciseman corroborates its truth—

“ The poets in their elegies and hymns
 Lamenting the departed, call the groves ;
 They call upon the hills and streams to mourn ;
 And senseless rocks ; nor idly : for they speak
 In these their invocations with a voice
 Of human passion.”

You have heard Milton—hear Burns—

“ Ye hills, near neebors o’ the starns,
 That proudly cock your crested cairns !
 Ye cliffs, the haunts of sailing yearns,
 Where echo slumbers !
 Come join ye, Nature’s sturdiest bairns,
 My wailing numbers !

“ Mourn, ilka grove the cushat kens !
 Ye haz’ly shaws and briery dens !
 Ye burnies, wimplin’ down your glens,
 Wi’ toddlin’ din,
 Or foaming strang, wi’ hasty stens,
 Frae linn to linn !

“ Mourn, little harebells o’er the lea ,
 Ye stately foxgloves fair to see,

Ye woodbines, hanging bonnilie,
 In scented bow'rs ;
 Ye roses on your thorny tree,
 The first o' flow'rs.

“ At dawn, when ev'ry grassy blade
 Droops with a diamond at its head ;
 At ev'n, when beans their fragrance shed,
 I' th' rustling gale ;
 Ye maukins whiddin thro' the glade,
 Come join my wail

“ Mourn, ye wee songsters o' the wood ;
 Ye grouse that crap the heather bud ;
 Ye kurlews calling thro' a clud ;
 Ye whistling plover ;
 And mourn, ye whirring paitrick brood !
 He's gane for ever !

“ Mourn, sooty coots, and speckled teals ;
 Ye fisher herons, watching eels ;
 Ye duck and drake, wi' airy wheels
 Circling the lake ;
 Ye bitterns, till the quagmire reels,
 Rair for his sake.

“ Mourn, clam'ring craiks at close o' day,
 'Mang fields o' flowing clover gay ;
 And when ye wing your annual way
 Frae our cauld shore,
 Tell thae far worlds, wha lies in clay,
 Wham ye deplore.

“ Ye houlets, frae your ivy bow'r,
 In some auld tree, or eldritch tow'r,
 What time the moon, wi' silent glow'r
 Sets up her horn,
 Wail thro' the dreary midnight hour
 Till waukrife morn !

“ Oh, rivers, forests, hills, and plains !
 Oft have ye heard my canty strains :
 But now, what else for me remains
 But tales of wo ?
 And frae my een the drapping rains
 Maun ever flow.

“ Mourn, spring, thou darling of the year !
 Ilk cowslip cup shall kep a tear :
 Thou, summer, while each corny spear
 Shoots up its head,
 Thy gay, green, flow’ry tresses shear
 For him that’s dead.

“ Thou, autumn, wi’ thy yellow hair,
 In grief thy sallow mantle tear !
 Thou, winter, hurling thro’ the air
 The roaring blast,
 Wide o’er the naked world declare
 The worth we’ve lost !

“ Mourn him, thou sun, great source of light !
 Mourn, empress of the silent night !
 And you, ye twinkling starnies bright,
 My Matthew mourn !
 For through your orbs he’s ta’en his flight,
 Ne’er to return.”

Of all Burns’s friends, the most efficient was Graham of Fintry. To him he owed Exciseman’s *diploma*—settlement as a gauger in the District of Ten Parishes, when he was gudeman at Ellisland—translation as gauger to Dumfries—support against insidious foes despicable yet not to be despised with rumor at their head—vindication at the Excise Board—*pro loco et tempore* supervisorship—and though he knew not of it, security from dreaded degradation on his deathbed. “ His First Epistle to Mr. Graham of Fintry ” is in the style, shall we say it, of Dryden and Pope ? It is a noble composition ; and these fine, vigorous, rough, and racy lines truly and duly express at once his independence and his gratitude :

“ Come thou who giv’st with all a courtier’s grace ;
 Friend of my life, true patron of my rhymes !
 Prop. of my dearest hopes for future times.
 Why shrinks my soul half blushing, half afraid,
 Backward, abash’d, to ask thy friendly aid ?
 I know my need, I know thy giving hand,
 I crave thy friendship at thy kind command ;
 But there are such who court the tuneful nine—
 Heavens ! should the branded character be mine !

Whose verse in manhood's pride sublimely flows,
 Yet vilest reptiles in their begging prose.
 Mark, how their lofty independent spirit
 Soars on the spurning wing of injur'd merit !
 Seek not the proofs in private life to find ;
 Pity the best of words should be but wind !
 So to heaven's gates the lark's shrill song ascends,
 But groveling on the earth the carol ends.
 In all the clam'rous cry of starving want,
 They dun benevolence with shameless front
 Oblige them, patronise their tinsel lays,
 They persecute you all their future days !
 Ere my poor soul such deep damnation stain,
 My horny fist assume the plough again ;
 The pie-bald jacket let me patch once more ;
On eighteen-pence a-week I've liv'd before.
 Tho' thanks to heaven, I dare even that last shift
 I trust, meantime, my boon is in thy gift :
 That, plac'd by thee upon the wish'd-for height,
 Where, man and nature fairer in her sight,
 My muse may imp her wing for some sublimer flight.”

Read over again the last three lines ! The favor requested was removal from the laborious and extensive district which he *surveyed* for the Excise at Ellisland to one of smaller dimensions at Dumfries ! In another Epistle, he renews the request, and says most affectingly—

“ I dread thee, fate, relentless and severe,
 With all a poet's, husband's, father's fear !
 Already one strong hold of hope is lost,
 Glencairn, the truly noble, lies in dust
 (Fled, like the sun eclips'd at noon appears,
 And left us darkling in a world of tears) ;
 Oh ! hear my ardent, grateful, selfish prayer !—
 Fintry, my other stay, long bless and spare !
 Thro' a long life his hopes and wishes crown ;
 And bright in cloudless skies his sun go down !
 May bliss domestic smoothe his private path,
 Give energy to life, and soothe his latest breath,
 With many a filial tear circling the bed of death ?”

The favor was granted—and in another Epistle was requited with immortal thanks.

"I call no goddess to inspire my strains,
A fabled muse may suit a bard that feigns ;
Friend of my life ! my ardent spirit burns,
And all the tribute of my heart returns,
For boons accorded, goodness ever new,
The gift still dearer, as the giver, you.

"Thou orb of day ! thy other paler light !
And all ye many sparkling stars of night ;
If aught that giver from my mind efface,
If I that giver's bounty e'er disgrace ;
Then roll to me, along your wandering spheres,
Only to number out a villain's years !"

Love, Friendship, Independence, Patriotism—these were the perpetual inspirers of his genius, even when they did not form the theme of his effusions. His religious feelings, his resentment against hypocrisy, and other occasional inspirations, availed only to the occasion on which they appear. But these influence him at all times, even while there is not a whisper about them, and when himself is unconscious of their operation. Everything most distinctive of his character will be found to appertain to them, whether we regard him as a poet or a man. His Patriotism was of the true poetic kind—intense—exclusive ; Scotland and the climate of Scotland were in his eyes the dearest to nature—Scotland and the people of Scotland the mother and the children of liberty. In his exultation, when a thought of foreign lands crossed his fancy, he asked, "What are they ? the haunts of the tyrant and slave." This was neither philosophical nor philanthropical ; in this Burns was a bigot. And the cosmopolite may well laugh to hear the cottager proclaiming that "the brave Caledonian views with disdain" spicy forests and gold-bubbling fountains with their ore and their nutmegs—and blessing himself in scant apparel on "cauld Caledonia's blast on the wave." The doctrine will not stand the scrutiny of judgment ; but with what concentrated power of poetry does the prejudice burst forth ? Let all lands have each its own prejudiced, bigoted, patriotic poets, blind and deaf to what lies beyond their own horizon, and thus shall the whole habitable world in due time be glorified. Shakspeare himself was never

so happy as when setting up England in power, in beauty, and in majesty above all the kingdoms of the earth.

In times of national security the feeling of Patriotism among the masses is so quiescent that it seems hardly to exist—in their case national glory or national danger awakens it, and it leaps up armed *cap-a-pie*. But the sacred fire is never extinct in a nation, and in tranquil times it is kept alive in the hearts of those who are called to high functions in the public service—by none is it *beeted* so surely as by the poets. It is the identification of individual feeling and interest with those of a community; and so natural to the human soul is this enlarged act of sympathy, that when not called forth by some great pursuit, peril, or success, it applies itself intensely to internal policy; and hence the animosities and rancor of parties, which are evidences, nay forms, though degenerate ones, of the Patriotic Feeling; and this is proved by the fact that on the approach of common danger, party differences in a great measure cease, and are transmuted into the one harmonious elemental Love of our Native Land. Burns was said at one time to have been a Jacobin as well as a Jacobite; and it must have required even all his genius to effect such a junction. He certainly wrote some so-so verses to the Tree of Liberty, and like Cowper, Wordsworth, and other great and good men, rejoiced when down fell the Bastille. But when there was a talk of taking our Island, he soon evinced the nature of his affection for the French.

“ Does haughty Gaul invasion threat ?

Then let the loons beware, Sir,
There’s wooden walls upon our seas,
And volunteers on shore, Sir.
The Nith shall run to Corsincon,
And Criffel sink in Solway,
Ere we permit a foreign foe
On British ground to rally.

Fall de rall, &c.

“ O let us not like snarling tykes

In wrangling be divided ;
Till slap come in an unco loon
And wi’ a rung decide it.

Be Britain still to Britain true,
 Amang oursels united ;
 For never but by British hands
 Maun British wrangs be righted.
 Fall de rall, &c.

“ The kettle o’ the kirk and state,
 Perhaps a claut may fail in’t ;
 But deil a foreign tinker loun
 Shall ever ca’ a nail in’t.
 Our fathers’ bluid the kettle bought,
 And wha wad dare to spoil it ;
 By heaven the sacrilegious dog
 Shall fuel be to boil it.
 Fall de rall, &c.

“ The wretch that wad a tyrant own,
 And the wretch his true-born brother,
 Who would set the *mob* aboon the *throne*,
 May they be damn’d together !
 Who will not sing, ‘ God save the King,’
 Shall hang as high ’s the steeple ;
 But while we sing, ‘ God save the King,’
 We’ll ne’er forget the People.”

These are far from being “ elegant ” stanzas—there is even a rudeness about them—but ‘t is the rudeness of the Scottish Thistle—a paraphrase of “ *nemo me impune lacesset.* ” The staple of the war-song is home-grown and home-spun. It flouts the air like a banner *not* idly spread, whereon “ the ruddy Lion ramps in gold.” Not all the orators of the day, in Parliament or out of it, in all their speeches put together embodied more political wisdom, or appealed with more effective power to the noblest principles of patriotism in the British heart.

“ A gentleman of birth and talents ” thus writes, in 1835, to Allan Cunningham : “ I was at the play in Dumfries, October, 1792, the Caledonian Hunt being then in town—the play was ‘ As you like it ’—Miss Fontenelle, Rosalind—when ‘ God save the king ’ was called for and sung ; we all stood up uncovered, but Burns sat still in the middle of the pit, with his hat on his head. There was a great tumult, with shouts of ‘ turn him out ’ and ‘ shame Burns ! ’ which continued a good while ; at last he

was either expelled or forced to take off his hat—*I forget which.*" And a lady with whom Robert Chambers once conversed, " remembered being present in the theatre of Dumfries, during the heat of the Revolution, when Burns entered the pit somewhat affected by liquor. On *God save the king* being struck up, the audience rose as usual, all except the intemperate poet, who cried for *Ca ira*. A tumult was the consequence, and Burns was compelled to leave the house." We cannot believe that Burns ever was guilty of such vulgar insolence—such brutality ; nothing else at all like it is recorded of him—and the worthy story-tellers are not at one as to the facts. The gentleman's memory is defective ; but had he himself been the offender, surely he would not have forgot whether he had been compelled to take off his hat, or had been jostled, perhaps only kicked out of the play-house. The lady's eyes and ears were sharper—for she saw " Burns enter the pit somewhat affected by liquor," and then heard him " cry for *Ca ira*." By what means he was " compelled to leave the house," she does not say ; but as he was " sitting in the middle of the pit," he must have been walked out very gently, so as not to have attracted the attention of the male narrator. If this public outrage of all decorum, decency, and loyalty, had been perpetrated by Burns, *in October*, one is at a loss to comprehend how, *in December*, he could have been " surprised, confounded, and distracted by Mr. Mitchell, the Collector, telling me that he has received an order for your Board to inquire into my political conduct, and blaming me as a person disaffected to government." The fact we believe to be this—that Burns, whose loyalty was suspected, had been rudely commanded to take off his hat by some vociferous time-servers—*just as he was going to do so*—that the row arose from his declining to uncover on compulsion, and subsided on his disdainfully doffing his beaver of his own accord. Had he cried for *Ca ira*, he would have deserved dismissal from the Excise ; and in his own opinion, translation to another post—" Wha will not sing *God save the King*, shall hang as high 's the steeple." *The year before*, " during the heat of the French Revolution," Burns composed his grand war-song—" Farewell, thou fair day, thou green earth, and ye skies," and sent it to Mrs. Dunlop with these

words : “ I have just finished the following song, which to a lady, the descendant of Wallace, and many heroes of his truly illustrious line—and herself the mother of several soldiers—needs neither preface nor apology.” And *the year after*, he composed “ The Poor and Honest Sodger,” “ which was sung,” says Allan Cunningham, “ in every cottage, village, and town. Yet the man who wrote it was supposed by the mean and the spiteful to be no well-wisher to his country !” Why, as men who have any hearts at all, love their parents in any circumstances, so they love their country, be it great or small, poor or wealthy, learned or ignorant, free or enslaved ; and even disgrace and degradation will not quench their filial affection to it. But Scotsmen have good reason to be proud of their country ; not so much for any particular event, as for her whole historical progress. Particular events, however, are thought of by them as the landmarks of that progress ; and these are the great points of history “ conspicuous in the nation’s eye.” Earlier times present “ the unconquered Caledonian spear ;” later, the unequal but generally victorious struggles with the sister country, issuing in national independence ; and later still, the holy devotion of the soul of the people to their own profound religious Faith, and its simple Forms. Would that Burns had pondered more on that warfare ! That he had sung its final triumph ! But we must be contented with his “ Scots wha hae wi’ Wallace bled ;” and with repeating after it with him, “ So may God defend the cause of truth and liberty, as he did that day ! Amen ! ”

Mr. Syme tells us that Burns composed this ode on the 31st of July, 1793, on the moor road between Kenmure and Gatehouse. “ The sky was sympathetic with the wretchedness of the soil ; it became lowering and dark—the winds sighed hollow—the lightning gleamed—the thunders rolled. The poet enjoyed the awful scene—he spoke not a word—but seemed rapt in meditation. In a little while the rain began to fall—it poured in floods upon us. For three hours did the wild elements rumble their bellyful upon our defenceless heads.” That is very fine indeed ; and “ what do you think,” asks Mr. Syme, “ Burns was about ? He was charging the English Army along with Bruce

at Bannockburn." On the second of August—when the weather was more sedate—on their return from St. Mary's Isle to Dumfries, "he was engaged in the same manner ;" and it appears from one of his own letters, that he returned to the charge one evening in September. The thoughts, and feelings, and images, came rushing upon him during the storm—they formed themselves into stanzas, like so many awkward squads of raw levies, during the serene state of the atmosphere—and under the harvest moon, firm as the measured tread of marching men, with admirable precision they wheeled into line. This account of the composition of the Ode would seem to clear Mr. Syme from a charge nothing short of falsehood brought against him by Allan Cuninghame. Mr. Syme's words are, "I said that in the midst of the storm, *On* the wilds of Kenmure, Burns was rapt in meditation. What do you think he was about ? He was charging the English army along with Bruce at Bannockburn. He was engaged in the same manner in our ride home from St. Mary's Isle, and I did not disturb him. *Next day he produced me the address of Bruce to his troops, and gave me a copy to Dalzell.*" Nothing can be more circumstantial ; and if not true, it is a thumper. Allan says, "Two or three plain words, and a stubborn date or two, will go far I fear to raise this pleasing legend into the regions of romance. The Galloway adventure, according to Syme, happened in July ; but in the succeeding September, the poet announced the song to Thomson in these words : 'There is a tradition which I have met with in many places in Scotland that the air of "*Hey tuttie taittie*" was Robert Bruce's march at the Battle of Bannockburn. This thought in my *yesternight's evening walk* warmed me to a pitch of enthusiasm on the theme of liberty and independence, which I threw into a kind of Scottish ode—that one might suppose to be the royal Scot's address to his heroic followers on that eventful morning. I showed the air to Urbani, who was greatly pleased with it, and begged me to make soft verses for it ; but I had no idea of giving myself any trouble on the subject till the accidental recollection of that glorious struggle for freedom, associated with the glowing idea of some other struggles of the same nature, not quite so ancient, roused up my rhyming mania ?'

Currie, to make the letter agree with the legend, altered *yesterday's evening walk* into solitary wanderings. Burns was indeed a remarkable man, and yielded no doubt to strange impulses; but to compose a song ‘in thunder, lightning, and in rain,’ intimates such self-possession as few possess.” We can more readily believe that Burns wrote “*yesterday's evening walk*,” to save himself the trouble of entering into any detail of his previous study of the subject, than that Syme told a downright lie. As to composing a song in a thunder-storm, Cuninghame—who is himself “a remarkable man,” and has composed some songs worthy of being classed with those of Burns, would find it one of the easiest and pleasantest of feats; for lightning is among the most harmless vagaries of the electric fluid, and in a hilly country, seldom singes but worsted stockings and sheep.

Burns sent the Address in its perfection to George Thomson—recommending it to be set to the old air—“*Hey tuttie taittie*”—according to Tradition, who cannot, however, be reasonably expected “to speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth”—Robert Bruce’s march at the Battle of Bannockburn. A committee of taste sat on “*Hey tuttie taittie*,” and pronounced it execrable. “I happened to dine yesterday,” says Mr. Thomson, “with a party of your friends, to whom I read it. They were all charmed with it; entreated me to find out a suitable air for it, and reprobated the idea of giving it a tune so totally devoid of interest or grandeur as ‘*Hey tuttie taittie*.’ Assuredly your partiality for this tune must arise from the ideas associated in your mind by the tradition concerning it, for I never heard any person—and I have conversed again and again with the greatest enthusiasts for Scottish airs—I say, I never heard any one speak of it as worthy of notice. I have been running over the whole hundred airs—of which I have lately sent you the list—and I think Lewie Gordon is most happily adapted to your ode, at least with a very slight alteration of the fourth line, which I shall presently submit to you. Now the variation I have to suggest upon the last line of each verse, the only line too short for the air, is as follows: Verse 1st, Or to *glorious victory*. 2d, *Chains*—chains and slavery. 3d, Let him, *let him* turn and flee. 4th, Let him *bravely* follow me. 5th, But *they shall*, they shall be

free. 6th, Let us, *let us* do or die." "Glorious" and "bravely," bad as they are, especially "bravely," which is indeed most bitter bad, might have been borne; but just suppose for a moment, that Robert Bruce had, in addressing his army "on the morning of that eventful day," come over again in that odd way every word he uttered, "chains—chains;" "let him—let him;" "they shall—they shall;" "let us—let us;" why the army would have thought him a Bauldy! Action, unquestionably, is the main point in oratory, and Bruce might have imposed on many by the peculiar style in which it is known he handled his battle-axe, but we do not hesitate to assert that had he stuttered in that style, the English would have won the day. Burns winced sorely, but did what he could to accommodate Lewie Gordon.

"The only line," said Mr. T., "which I dislike in the whole of the song is 'Welcome to your gory bed.' Would not another word be preferable to 'welcome?'" Mr. T. proposed "honor's bed;" but Burns replied, "Your idea of 'honor's bed' is, though a beautiful, a hackneyed idea; so if you please we will let the line stand as it is." But Mr. T. was tenacious—"One word more with regard to your heroic ode. I think, with great deference to the poet, that a prudent general would avoid saying anything to his soldiers which might tend to make death more frightful than it is. 'Gory' presents a disagreeable image to the mind; and to tell them, 'Welcome to your gory bed,' seems rather a discouraging address, notwithstanding the alternative which follows. I have shown the song to *three friends of excellent taste*, and each of them objected to this line, which emboldens me to use the freedom of bringing it again under your notice. I would suggest 'Now prepare for honor's bed, or for glorious victory.'" Quoth Burns grimly—"My ode pleases me so much that I cannot alter it. Your proposed alteration would, in my opinion, make it tame. I have scrutinized it over and over again, and to the world some way or other it shall go, as it is." That four Scotsmen, taken *seriatim et separatim*—in the martial ardor of their patriotic souls should object to "Welcome to your gory bed," from an uncommunicated apprehension common to the nature of them all and operating like an instinct, that it was fitted

to frighten Robert Bruce's army, and make it take to its heels, leaving the cause of Liberty and Independence to shift for itself, is a coincidence that sets at defiance the doctrine of chances, proves history to be indeed an old almanack, and national character an empty name.

“ Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace bled,
Scots wham Bruce has often led,
Welcome to your gory bed,
Or to victory.

“ Now's the day, and now's the hour ;
See the front o' battle lower ;
See approach proud Edward's power—
Chains and slavery !

“ Wha will be a traitor knave ?
Wha can fill a coward's grave ?
Wha sae base as be a slave ?
Let him turn and flee !

“ Wha for Scotland's king and law
Freedom's sword will strongly draw,
Free-man stand, or free-man fa',
Let him on wi' me !

“ By oppression's woes and pains !
By your sons in servile chains !
We will drain our dearest veins,
But they shall be free !

“ Lay the proud usurpers low !
Tyrants fall in every foe !
Liberty's in every blow !
Let us do, or die !”

All Scotsmen at home and abroad swear this is the Grandest Ode out of the Bible. What if it be not an Ode at all ? An Ode, however, let it be ; then, wherein lies the power it possesses of stirring up into a devouring fire the *perfervidum ingenium Scotorum* ? The two armies suddenly stand before us in order of battle—and in the grim repose preceding the tempest we hear but the voice of Bruce. The whole Scottish army hears it—now standing on their feet—risen from their knees as the abbot

of Inchchaffray had blessed them and the Banner of Scotland with its roots of Stone. At the first six words a hollow murmur is in that wood of spears. "Welecome to your gory bed!" a shout that shakes the sky. Hush! hear the King. At *Edward's* name what a yell! "Wha will be a traitor knave?" Muttering thunder growls reply. The inspired Host in each appeal anticipates the Leader—yet shudders with fresh wrath, as if each reminded it of some intolerable wrong. "Let us do or die"—the English are overthrown—and Scotland is free.

That is a very Scottish critique indeed—but none the worse for that; so our English friends must forgive it, and be consoled by Flodden. The Ode is sublime. Death and Life at that hour are one and the same to the heroes. So that Scotland but survive, what is breath or blood to them? Their being is in their country's liberty, and with it secured they will live for ever.

Our critique is getting more and more Scottish still; so to rid ourselves of nationality, we request such of you as think we over-laud the Ode to point out one word in it that would be better away. You cannot. Then pray have the goodness to point out one word missing that ought to have been there—please to insert a desiderated stanza. You cannot. Then let the bands of all the Scottish regiments play "Hey tuittie taitie;" and the two Dun-Edins salute one another with a salvo that shall startle the echoes from Berwick-Law to Benmore.

Of the delight with which Burns labored for Mr. Thomson's Collection, his letters contain some lively description. "You cannot imagine," says he, 7th April, 1793, "how much this business has added to my enjoyment. What with my early attachment to ballads, your book and ballad-making are now as completely my hobby as ever fortification was my uncle Toby's; so I'll e'en canter it away till I come to the limit of my race (God grant I may take the right side of the winning post), and then, cheerfully looking back on the honest folks with whom I have been happy, I shall say or sing, 'Sae merry as we a' hae been,' and raising my last looks to the whole human race, the last words of the voice of Coila shall be, 'Good night and joy be with you a'!" James Gray was the first, who independently

of every other argument, proved the impossibility of the charges that had too long been suffered to circulate without refutation against Burns's character and conduct during his later years, by pointing to these almost daily effusions of his clear and unclouded genius. His innumerable Letters furnish the same best proof; and when we consider how much of his time was occupied by his professional duties, how much by perpetual interruption of visitors from all lands, how much by blameless social intercourse with all classes in Dumfries and its neighborhood, and how frequently he suffered under constitutional ailments affecting the very seat and source of life, we cannot help despising the unreflecting credulity of his biographers who with such *products* before their eyes, such a display of feeling, fancy, imagination and intellect continually alive and on the alert, could keep one after another for twenty years in doleful dissertations deplored over his *habits*—most of them at the close of their wearisome moralizing anxious to huddle all up, that his countrymen might not be obliged to turn away their faces in shame from the last scene in the Tragedy of the Life of Robert Burns.

During the four years Burns lived in Dumfries he was never known for one hour to be negligent of his professional duties. We are but imperfectly acquainted with the details of the business of a gauger, but the calling must be irksome; and he was an active, steady, correct, courageous officer—to be relied on equally in his conduct and his accounts. Josiah Walker, who was himself, if we mistake not, for a good many years in the Customs or Excise at Perth, will not allow him to have been a good gauger. In descanting on the unfortunate circumstances of his situation, he says with a voice of authority, “his superiors were bound to attend to no qualification, but such as was conducive to the benefit of the revenue; and it would have been equally criminal in them to pardon any incorrectness on account of his literary genius, as on account of his dexterity in ploughing. The merchant or attorney who acts for himself alone, is free to overlook some errors of his clerk, for the sake of merits totally unconnected with business; but the Board of Excise had no power to indulge their poetical taste, or their tenderness for

him by whom it had been gratified, at the expense of the public. Burns was therefore in a place where he could turn his peculiar endowments to little advantage ; and where he could not, without injustice, be preferred to the most obtuse and uninteresting of his brethren, who surpassed him in the humble recommendation of exactness, vigilance, and sobriety. Attention to these circumstances might have prevented insinuations against the liberality of his superior officers, for showing so little desire to advance him, and so little indulgence to those eccentricities for which the natural temperament of genius could be pleaded. For two years, however, Burns stood sufficiently high in the opinion of the Board, and it is surely by no means improper, that where professional pretensions are nearly balanced, the additional claims of literary talent should be permitted to turn the scale. Such was the reasoning of a particular member of the Board, whose taste and munificence were of corresponding extent, and who saw no injustice in giving some preference to an officer who could write permits as well as any other, and poems much better.” Not for worlds would we say a single syllable derogatory from the merits of the Board of Excise. We respect the character of the defunct ; and did we not, still we should have the most delicate regard to the feelings of its descendants, many of whom are probably now prosperous gentlemen. It was a Board that richly deserved, in all its dealings, the utmost eulogies with which the genius and gratitude of Josiah Walker could brighten its green cloth. Most criminal indeed would it have been in such a Board—most wicked and most sinful—“to pardon any incorrectness on account of Burns’s literary genius, as on account of his dexterity in ploughing.” Deeply impressed with a sense—approaching to that of awe—of the responsibility of the Board to its conscience and its country, we feel that it is better late than never, thus to declare before the whole world, A. D. 1840, that from winter 1791 to summer 1796, the “Board had no power to indulge their poetical taste, or their tenderness for him by whom it had been gratified, at the expense of the public.” The Board, we doubt not, had a true innate poetical taste, and must have derived a far higher and deeper delight from the poems than the permits of Burns ; nay, we are

willing to believe that it was itself the author of a volume of poetry, and editor of a literary journal.

But surpassing even Josiah Walker in our veneration of the Board, we ask, what has all this to do with the character of Burns? Its desire and its impotency to promote him are granted; but of what incorrectness had Burns been guilty, which it would have been criminal in the Board to pardon? By whom, among the "most obtuse and uninteresting of his brethren," had he been surpassed "in the humble recommendation of exactness, vigilance, and sobriety?" Not by a single one. Mr. Findlater, who was Burns's supervisor from his admission into the Excise, *and sat by him the night before he died*, says, "In all that time, the superintendence of his behavior, as an officer of the revenue, was a part of my official province, and it may be supposed I would not be an inattentive observer of the general conduct of a man and a poet so celebrated by his countrymen. In the former capacity he was exemplary in his attention, and was even jealous of the least imputation on his vigilance. * * * It was not till near the latter end of his days, that there was any falling off in this respect, and this was amply accounted for in the pressure of disease and accumulating infirmities. I will farther avow, that I never saw him—which was very frequently while he lived at Ellisland—and still more so, almost every day, after he removed to Dumfries, but in hours of business he was quite himself, and capable of discharging the duties of his office; nor was he ever known to drink by himself, or ever to indulge in the use of liquor on a forenoon. I have seen Burns in all his various phases—in his convivial moments, in his sober moods, and in the bosom of his family; indeed, I believe that I saw more of him than any other individual had occasion to see, after he became an excise officer, and I never beheld anything like the gross enormities with which he is now charged. That when set down on an evening with a few friends whom he liked, he was apt to prolong the social hour beyond the bounds which prudence would dictate, is unquestionable; but in his family I will venture to say he was never otherwise than as attentive and affectionate to a high degree." Such is the testi-

mony of the supervisor respecting the gauger; and in that capacity Burns stands up one of its very best servants before the Board. There was no call, therefore, for Josiah's Jeremiad. But our words have not been wasted; for Burns's character has suffered far more from such aspersions as these, which, easily as they can be wiped away, were too long left as admitted stains on his memory, than from definite and direct charges of specific facts; and it is still the duty of every man who writes about him, to apply the sponge. Nothing, we repeat, shall tempt us to blame or abuse the Board. But we venture humbly to confess that we do not clearly see that the Board would have been "gratifying its tenderness at the expense of the public," had it, when told by Burns that he was dying, and disabled by the hand of God from performing actively the duties of his temporary supervisorship, requested *its maker* to continue to him for a few months his full salary—seventy pounds a year—instead of reducing it in the proportion of one-half—not because he was a genius, a poet, and the author of many immortal productions—but merely because he was a man and an exciseman, and moreover the father of a few mortal children, who with their mother were in want of bread.

Gray, whom we knew well and highly esteemed, was a very superior man to honest Findlater—a man of poetical taste and feeling, and a scholar—on all accounts well entitled to speak of the character of Burns; and though there were no bounds to his enthusiasm when poets and poetry were the themes of his discourse, he was a worshipper of truth, and rightly believed that it was best seen in the light of love and admiration. Compare his bold, generous, and impassioned eulogy on the noble qualities and dispositions of his illustrious friend, with the timid, guarded, and repressed praise for ever bordering on censure, of biographers who never saw the poet's face, and yet have dared to draw his character with the same assurance of certainty in their delineations as if they had been of the number of his familiars, and had looked a thousand times, by night and day, into the saddest secrets of his heart. Far better, surely, in a world like this, to do more rather than less than justice to the goodness of great men. No fear that the world, in its final

judgment, will not make sufficient deduction from the laud, if it be exaggerated, which love, inspired by admiration and pity, delights to bestow, as the sole tribute now in its power, on the virtues of departed genius. Calumny may last for ages—we had almost said for ever; lies have life even in their graves, and centuries after they have been interred they will burst their cerements, and walk up and down, in the face of day, undistinguishable to the weak eyes of mortals from truths—till they touch; and then the truths expand, and the lies shrivel up, but after a season to reappear, and to be welcomed back again by the dwellers in this delusive world.

“He was courted,” says Gray, “by all classes of men for the fascinating powers of his conversation, but over his social scene uncontrolled passion never presided. Over the social bowl, his wit flashed for hours together, penetrating whatever it struck, like the fire from heaven; but even in the hour of thoughtless gaiety and merriment I never knew it tainted by indecency. It was playful or caustic by turns, following an allusion through all its windings; astonishing by its rapidity, or amusing by its wild originality and grotesque yet natural combinations, but never, within my observation, disgusting by its grossness. In his morning hours, I never saw him like one suffering from the effects of last night’s intemperance. He appeared then clear and unclouded. He was the eloquent advocate of humanity, justice, and political freedom. From his paintings, virtue appeared more lovely, and piety assumed a more celestial mien. While his keen eye was pregnant with fancy and feeling, and his voice attuned to the very passion which he wished to communicate, it would hardly have been possible to conceive any being more interesting and delightful. * * * The men with whom he generally associated, were not of the lowest order. He numbered among his intimate friends, many of the most respectable inhabitants of Dumfries and the vicinity. Several of those were attached to him by ties that the hand of calumny, busy as it was, could never snap asunder. They admired the poet for his genius, and loved the man for the candor, generosity, and kindness of his nature. His early friends clung to him through good and bad report, with a zeal and fidelity that prove their

disbelief of the malicious stories circulated to his disadvantage. Among them were some of the most distinguished characters in this country and not a few females, eminent for delicacy, taste, and genius. They were proud of his friendship, and cherished him to the last moment of his existence. He was endeared to them even by his misfortunes, and they still retain for his memory that affectionate veneration which virtue alone inspires."

Gray tells us too that it came under his own view professionally, that Burns superintended the education of his children—and promising children they were, nor has that promise been disappointed—with a degree of care that he had never known surpassed by any parent whatever ; that to see him in the happiest light you had to see him, as he often did, in his own house, and that nothing could exceed the mutual affection between husband and wife in that lowly tenement. Yet of this man, Josiah Walker, who claims to have been his friend as well as James Gray, writes, " soured by disappointment, and stung with occasional remorse, *impatient of finding little to interest him at home*, and rendered inconstant from returns of his hypochondriacal ailment, multiplied by his irregular life, he saw the difficulty of keeping terms with the world ; *and abandoned the attempt in a rash and regardless despair !*"

It may be thought by some that we have referred too frequently to Walker's Memoir, perhaps that we have spoken of it with too much asperity, and that so respectable a person merited tenderer treatment at our hands. He was a respectable person, and for that very reason, we hope by our strictures to set him aside for ever as a biographer of Burns. He had been occasionally in company with the Poet in Edinburgh, in 1787, and had seen him during his short visit at Athol house. " Circumstances led him to Scotland in November, 1795, after an absence of eight years, and he felt strongly prompted " to visit his old friend ; for your common-place man immediately becomes hand in glove with your man of genius, to whom he has introduced himself, and ever after the first interview designates him by that flattering appellation " my friend." " For this purpose I went to Dumfries, and called upon him early in the forenoon. I found him in a small house of one story. He was sitting in a win-

dow-seat reading with the doors open, and the family arrangements going on in his presence, and altogether without that snugness and seclusion which a student requires. After conversing with him for some time, he proposed a walk, and promised to conduct me through some of his favorite haunts. We accordingly quitted the town, and wandered a considerable way up the beautiful banks of the Nith. Here he gave me an account of his latest productions, and repeated some satirical ballads which he had composed, to favor one of the Candidates at last election. These I thought inferior to his other pieces, though they had some lines in which dignity compensated for coarseness. He repeated also his fragment of an *Ode to Liberty*, with marked and peculiar energy, and showed a disposition which, however, was easily repressed, to throw out political remarks, of the same nature with those for which he had been reprehended. On finishing our walk, he passed some time with me at the inn, and I left him early in the evening, to make another visit at some distance from Dumfries. On the second morning after I returned with a friend—who was acquainted with the poet—and we found him ready to pass a part of the day with us at the inn. On this occasion I did not think him quite so interesting as he had appeared at the outset. His conversation was too elaborate, and his expression weakened by a frequent endeavor to give it artificial strength. He had been accustomed to speak for applause in the circles which he frequented, and seemed to think it necessary, in making the most common remark, to depart a little from the ordinary simplicity of language, and to couch it in something of epigrammatic point. In his praise and censure he was so decisive, as to render a dissent from his judgment difficult to be reconciled with the laws of good breeding. His wit was not more licentious than is unhappily too venial in higher circles, though I thought him rather unnecessarily free in the avowal of his excesses. Such were the clouds by which the pleasures of the evening were partially shaded, but coruscations of genius were visible between them. When it began to grow late, he showed no disposition to retire, but called for fresh supplies of liquor with a freedom which might be excusable, as we were in an inn, and no condition had been distinctly made,

though it might easily have been inferred, had the inference been welcome, that he was to consider himself as our guest ; nor was it till he saw us worn out, that he departed about three in the morning with a reluctance, which probably proceeded less from being deprived of our company, than from being confined to his own. Upon the whole, I found this last interview not quite so gratifying as I had expected ; although I discovered in his conduct no errors which I had not seen in men who stand high in the favor of society, or sufficient to account for the mysterious insinuations which I heard against his character. He on this occasion drank freely without being intoxicated—a circumstance from which I concluded, not only that his constitution was still unbroken, but that he was not addicted to solitary cordials ; for if he had tasted liquor in the morning, he must have easily yielded to the excess of the evening. He did not, however, always escape so well. About two months after, returning at the same unseasonable hour from a similar revel, in which he was probably better supported by his companions, he was so much disordered as to occasion a considerable delay in getting home, where he arrived with the chill of cold without, and inebriety within," &c.

And for this the devotee had made what is called "a pilgrimage to the shrine of genius" as far as Dumfries ! Is this the spirit in which people with strong propensities for poetry are privileged to write of poets, long after they have been gathered to their rest ? No tenderness—no pity—no respect—no admiration—no gratitude—no softening of heart —no kindling of spirit—on recollection of his final farewell to Robert Burns ! If the interview had not been satisfactory, he was bound in friendship to have left no record of it. Silence in that case was a duty especially incumbent on him who had known Burns in happier times, when "Dukes, and Lords, and mighty Earls" were proud to receive the ploughman. He might not know it then, but he knew it soon afterwards, that Burns was much broken down in body and spirit.

Those two days should have worn to him in retrospect a mournful complexion ; and the more so, that he believed Burns to have been then a ruined man in character, which he had once

prized above life. He calls upon him early in the forenoon, and finds him "in a small house of one story (it happened to have two), on a window-seat reading, with the doors open, and the family arrangements going on in his presence." After eight years' absence from Scotland, did not his heart leap at the sight of her greatest son sitting thus happy in his own humble household? Twenty years after, did not his heart melt at the rising up of the sanctified image? No—for the room was "altogether *without that appearance of snugness* and seclusion which a student requires!" The poet conducted him through some of his beautiful haunts, and for his amusement let off some of his electioneering squibs, which are among the very best ever composed, and Whiggish as they are, might have tickled a Tory as they jogged along; but Jos thought them "inferior to his other pieces," and so no doubt they were to the "Cotter's Saturday Night," and "Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled." Perhaps they walked as far as Lincluden—and the bard repeated his famous fragment of an "Ode to Liberty"—with "marked and peculiar energy." The listener ought to have lost his wits, and to have leapt sky-high. But he who was destined to "The Defence of Order," felt himself called by the voice that sent him on that mission, to rebuke the bard on the banks of his own river—for "he showed a disposition which, however, was easily repressed, to throw out political remarks, of the same nature with those for which he had been reprehended," three years before by the Board of Excise! Mr. Walker was not a Commissioner. Burns, it is true, had been told "not to think;" but here was a favorable opportunity for violating with safety that imperial mandate. Woods have ears, but in their whispers they betray no secrets—had Burns talked treason, 'twould have been pity to stop his tongue. This world is yet rather in the dark as to "the political remarks for which he had been reprehended," and as he "threw out some of the same nature," why was the world allowed to remain unenlightened? What right had Josiah Walker to repress any remarks made, in the confidence of friendship, by Robert Burns? And what power? Had Burns chosen it, he could as easily have *squabashed* Josiah as thrown him into the Nith. He was not to

be put down by fifty such ; he may have refrained, but he was not repressed, and in courtesy to his companion, treated him with an old wife's song.

The record of the second day is shameful. To ask any person, however insignificant, to your inn, and then find fault with him in a private letter for keeping you out of bed, would not be gentlemanly ; but of such an offence twenty years after his death publicly to accuse Burns ! No mention is made of dinner—and we shrewdly suspect Burns dined at home. However, he gave up two days to the service of his friend, and his friend's friend, and such was his reward. Why did not this dignified personage "repress" Burns's licentious wit as well as his political opinions ? If it was "not more licentious than is unhappily too venial in higher circles," why mention it at all ? What were "the excesses" of which he was unnecessarily free in the avowal ? They could not have regarded unlawful intercourse with the sex—for "they were not sufficient to account for the mysterious insinuations against his character," all of which related to women. Yet this wretched mixture of meanness, worldliness, and morality, interlarded with some liberal sentiment, and spiced with spite, absolutely seems intended for a vindication !

There are generally two ways at least of telling the same story ; and 'tis pity we have not Burns's own account of that long *sederunt*. It is clear that before midnight he had made the discovery that his right and his left hand assessor were a couple of solemn blockheads, and that to relieve the tedium, he kept plying them with all manner of *bams*. Both gentlemen were probably in black, and though laymen, decorous as deacons on religion and morality—and defenders of the faith—sententious champions of Church and State. It must have been amusing to see them gape. Nobody ever denied that Burns always conducted himself with the utmost propriety in presence of those whom he respected for their genius, their learning, or their worth. Without sacrificing an atom of his independence, how deferential, nay, how reverential was he in his behavior to Dugald Stewart ! Had *he* and Dr. Blair entertained Burns as their guest in that inn, how delightful had been the evening's record ! No such "licentious wit as is unhappily too venial in higher circles,"

would have flowed from his lips—no “unnecessarily free avowal of his excesses.” He would have delighted the philosopher and the divine with his noble sentiments as he had done of old—the illustrious Professor would have remembered and heard again the beautiful eloquence that charmed him on the Braid-hills. There can be nothing unfair surely in the conjecture, that these gentlemen occasionally contributed a sentence or two to the stock of conversation. They were *entertaining* Burns, and good manners must have induced them now and then “here to interpose” with a small smart remark—sentiment facete—or unctuous anecdote. Having lived in “higher circles,” and heard much of the “licentious wit unhappily too venial there,” we do not well see how they could have avoided giving their guest a few specimens of it. Grave men are often gross—and they were both grave as ever was earthenware. Such wit is the most contagious of any; and “budge doctors of the Stoic fur” then express “Fancies” that are anything but “Chaste and Noble.” Who knows but that they were driven into indecency by the desperation of self-defence—took refuge in repartee—and fought the gauger with his own rod? That Burns, in the dead silence that ever and anon occurred, should have called for “fresh supplies of liquor,” is nothing extraordinary. For there is not in nature or in art a sadder spectacle than an empty bottle standing in the centre of a circle, equidistant from three friends, one of whom had returned to his native land after a yearning absence of eight years, another anonymous, and the third the author of Scotch Drink and the Earnest Cry. Josiah more than insinuates that he himself shy’d the bottle. We more than doubt it—we believe that for some hours he turned up his little finger as frequently as Burns. He did right to desist as soon as he had got his dose, and of that he was not only the best but the only judge; he appears to have been sewn up “when it began to grow late;” Burns was sober as a lark “about three in the morning.” It is likely enough that “about two months after, Burns was better supported by his companions at a *similar revel*”—so much better indeed in every way that the *revel was dissimilar*; but still we cling to our first belief, that the two gentlemen in black drank as much as could have been rea-

sonably expected of them—that is, as much as they could hold—had they attempted more, there is no saying what might have been the consequences. And we still continue to think, too, that none but a heartless man, or a man whose heart had been puffed up like a bladder with vanity, would have tagged to the tail of his pitiful tale of that night, that cruel statement of “cold without, and inebriety within,” which was but the tittle-tattle of gossipping tradition, and most probably a lie.

This is the proper way to treat all such *memorabilia*—with the ridicule of contempt and scorn. Refute falsehood first, and then lash the fools that utter it. Much of the obloquy that so long rested on the memory of our great National Poet originated in frivolous hearsays of his life and conversation; which in every telling lost some portion of whatever truth might have belonged to them, and acquired at least an equal portion of falsehood, till they became unmixed calumnies—many of them of the blackest kind—got into print, which is implicitly believed by the million—till the simple story, which, as first told, had illustrated some interesting trait of his character or genius, as last told, redounded to his disgrace, and was listened to by the totally abstinent with uplifted eyes; hands, and shoulders, as an anecdote of the dreadful debaucheries of Robert Burns.

That he did sometimes associate, while in Edinburgh, with persons not altogether worthy of him, need not be denied, nor wondered at, for it was inevitable. He was not for ever beset with the consciousness of his own supereminence. Prudence he did not despise, and he has said some strong things in her praise; but she was not, in his system of morality, the Queen of Virtues. His genius, so far from separating him from any portion of his kind, impelled him towards humanity, without fear and without suspicion. No saint or prude was he to shun the society of “Jolly companions every one.” Though never addicted to drinking, he had often set the table in a roar at Tarbolton, Mauchline, Kirkoswald, Irvine and Ayr, and was he all at once to appear in the character of dry Quaker in Edinburgh? Were the joys that circle round the flowing bowl to be interdicted to him alone, the wittiest, the brightest, the most original, and the most eloquent of all the men of his day? At

Ellisland we know for certain, that his domestic life was temperate and sober ; and that beyond his own doors, his convivialities among "gentle and simple," though not unfrequent were not excessive, and left his character without any of those deeper stains with which it has been since said to have been sullied. It is for ever to be lamented that he was more dissipated at Dumfries—how much more—and under what stronger temptations, can be told in not many words. But every glass of wine "or stouter cheer" he drank—like mere ordinary men too fond of the festive hour—seems to have been set down against him as a separate sin ; and the world of fashion, and of philosophy too, we fear, both of which used him rather scurvily at last, would not be satisfied unless Burns could be made out—a drunkard ! Had he not been such a wonderful man in conversation, he might have enjoyed unhurt the fame of his poetry. But what was reading his poetry, full as it is of mirth and pathos, to hearing the Poet ! When all were desirous of the company of a man of such genius and such dispositions, was it in human nature to be always judicious in the selection or rejection of associates ? His deepest and best feelings he for the most part kept sacred for communion with those who were held by him in honor as well as love. But few were utterly excluded from the cordiality of one who, in the largeness of his heart, could sympathize with all, provided he could but bring out by the stroke of the keen-tempered steel of his own nature, some latent spark of humanity from the flint of theirs ; and it is easy to see with what dangers he thus must have been surrounded, when his genius and humor, his mirth and glee, his fun and frolic, and all the outrageous merriment of his exhilarated or maddened imagination came to be considered almost as common property by all who chose to introduce themselves to Robert Burns, and thought themselves entitled to do so because they could prove they had his poems by heart. They sent for the gauger, and the gauger came. A prouder man breathed not, but he had never been subjected to the ceremonial of manners, the rule of artificial life ; and he was ready, at all times, to grasp the hand held out in friendship, to go when a message said come, for he knew

that his “ low-roof’d house ” was honored because by his genius he had greatly glorified his people.

We have seen, from one characteristic instance, how shamefully his condescension must often have been abused ; and no doubt but that sometimes he behaved imprudently in such parties, and incurred the blame of intemperance. Frequently must he have joined them with a heavy heart ! How little did many not among the worst of those who stupidly stared at the “ wondrous guest ” understand of his real character ! How often must they have required mirth from him in his melancholy, delight in his despair ! The coarse buffoon ambitious to show off before the author of “ *Tam o’ Shanter* ” and “ *The Holy Friar* ”—how could it enter into his fat heart to conceive, in the midst of his own roaring ribaldry, that the fire-eyed son of genius was a hypochondriac, sick of life ! Why such a fellow would think nothing next morning of impudently telling his cronies that on the whole he had been disappointed in the Poet. Or in another key, forgetting that the Poet who continued to sit late at a tavern table, need own no relationship but that of time and place with the proser who was lying resignedly under it, the drunkard boasts all over the city of the glorious night he had had with BURNS.

But of the multitudes who thus sought the society of Burns, there must have been many in every way qualified to enjoy it. His fame had crossed the Tweed ; and though a knowledge of his poetry could not then have been prevalent over England, he had ardent admirers among the most cultivated classes, before whose eyes, shadowed in a language but imperfectly understood, had dawned a new and beautiful world of rustic life. Young men of generous birth, and among such lovers of genius some doubtless themselves endowed with the precious gift, acquainted with the clod-hoppers of their own country, longed to behold the prodigy who had stalked between the stilts of the plough in moods of tenderest or loftiest inspiration ; and it is pleasing to think that the poet was not seldom made happy by such visitors—that they carried back with them to their own noblest land a still deeper impression of the exalted worth of the genius of Caledonia. Nor did the gold coin of the genius of

Burns sustain any depreciation during his lifetime in his own country. He had that to comfort him—that to glory in till the last; and in his sorest poverty, it must have been his exceeding great reward. Ebenezer Elliot has nobly expressed that belief—and coupled with it—as we have often done—the best vindication of Scotland—

“BUT SHALL IT OF OUR Sires BE TOLD
THAT THEY THEIR BROTHER POOR FORSOOK?
No! FOR THEY GAVE HIM MORE THAN GOLD;
THEY READ THE BRAVE MAN'S BOOK.”

What happens during their life, more or less, to all eminent men, happened to Burns. Thinking on such things, one sometimes cannot help believing that man hates to honor man, till the power in which miracles have been wrought is extinguished or withdrawn; and then, when jealousy, envy, and all uncharitableness of necessity cease, we confess its grandeur, bow down to it, and worship it. But who were they who in his own country continued most steadfastly to honor his genius and himself, all through what have been called, truly in some respects, falsely in others, his dark days in Dumfries, and on to his death? Not Lords and Earls, not lawyers and wits, not philosophers and doctors, though among the nobility and gentry, among the classes of leisure and of learning, he had friends who wished him well, and were not indisposed to serve him; not the male generation of critics, not the literary prigs epicene, not of decided sex the blues celestial, though many periods were rounded among them upon the Ayrshire ploughman; but the MEN OF HIS OWN ORDER, with their wives and daughters—shepherds, and herdsmen, and ploughmen, delvers and ditchers, hewers of wood and drawers of water, soldiers and sailors, whether regulars, militia, fencibles, volunteers, on board king's or merchant's ship “far, far at sea” or dirt gabbert—within a few yards of the land on either side of the Clyde or the Cart—the WORKING PEOPLE, whatever the instruments of their toil, they patronized Burns then, they patronize him now, they would not have hurt a hair of his head, they will not hear of any dishonor to his dust, they know well what it is to endure, to

yield, to enjoy, and to suffer, and the memory of their own bard will be hallowed for ever among the brotherhood like a religion.

In Dumfries—as in every other considerable town in Scotland—and we might add England—it was then customary, you know, with the respectable inhabitants, to pass a convivial hour or two of an evening in some decent tavern or other—and Burns's *houf* was the Globe, kept by honest Mrs. Hyslop, who had a sonsie sister, “Anna wi' the gowden locks,” the heroine of what in his fond deceit he thought was the best of all his songs. The worthy towns-folk did not frequent bar, or parlor, or club-room—at least they did not think they did—from a desire for drink; though doubtless they often took a glass more than they intended, nay, sometimes even two; and the prevalence of such a system of social life, for it was no less, must have given rise, with others besides the predisposed, to very hurtful habits. They met to expatiate and confer on state affairs—to read the newspapers—to talk a little scandal—and so forth—and the result was, we have been told, considerable dissipation. The system was not excellent; dangerous to a man whose face was always more than welcome; without whom there was wanting the evening or the morning star. Burns latterly indulged too much in such compotations, and sometimes drank more than was good for him; *but not a man now alive in Dumfries ever saw him intoxicated*; and the survivors all unite in declaring that he cared not whether the stoup were full or empty, so that there were *conversation*—argumentative or declamatory, narrative or anecdotal, grave or gay, satirical or sermonic; nor would any of them have hoped to see the sun rise again in this world, had Burns portentously fallen asleep. They had much better been, one and all of them, even on the soberest nights, at their own firesides, or in their beds, and orgies that seemed moderation itself in a *houf*, would have been felt outrageous in a *home*. But the blame, whatever be its amount, must not be heaped on the head of Burns, while not a syllable has ever been said of the same enormities steadily practised for a series of years by the dignitaries of the borough, who by themselves and friends were opined to have been from youth upwards among the most sober of the children of Adam. Does anybody suppose that Burns

would have addicted himself to any meetings considered disreputable—or that, had he lived now, he would have *frequented* any tavern, except, perhaps, some not unfavored one in the airy realms of imagination, and built among the clouds?

Malicious people would not have ventured during his lifetime, in underhand and undertoned insinuations, to whisper away Burns's moral character, nor would certain memorialists have been so lavish of their lamentations and regrets over his evil habits, had not his political principles during his later years been such as to render him with many an object of suspicion equivalent, in troubled times, to fear and hatred. A revolution that shook the foundations on which so many old evils and abuses rested, and promised to restore to millions their natural liberties, and by that restoration to benefit all mankind, must have agitated his imagination to a pitch of enthusiasm far beyond the reach of ordinary minds to conceive, who nevertheless thought it no presumption on their part to decide dogmatically on the highest questions in political science, the solution of which, issuing in terrible practice, had upset one of the most ancient, and as it had been thought, one of the firmest of thrones. No wonder that with his eager and earnest spirit for ever on his lips, he came to be reputed a Democrat. Dumfries was a Tory Town, and could not tolerate a revolutionary—the term was not in use then—a Radical Exciseman. And to say the truth, the idea must have been not a little alarming to weak nerves, of Burns as a demagogue. With such eyes and such a tongue he would have proved a formidable Man of the People. It is certain that he spoke and wrote rashly and reprehensibly—and deserved a caution from the Board. But not such tyrannical reproof; and perhaps it was about as absurd in the Board to order Burns not to think, as it would have been in him to order it to think, for thinking comes of nature, and not of institution, and 'tis about as difficult to control as to create it. He defended himself boldly, and like a man conscious of harboring in his bosom no evil wish to the State. "In my defence to their accusations I said, that whatever might be my sentiments of republics, ancient or modern, as to Britain I abjured the idea; that a constitution, which in its original principles, experience had proved to be in

every way fitted for our happiness in society, it would be insanity to sacrifice to an untried visionary theory ;—that in consideration of my being situated in a department, however humble, immediately in the hands of people in power, I had forborne taking an active part, either personally, or as an author, in the present business of reform ; but that when I must declare my sentiments, I would say there existed a system of corruption between the executive power and the representative part of the legislature which boded no good to our glorious constitution, and which every patriotic Briton must wish to see amended.” His biographers have had difficulty in forming their opinion as to the effect on Burns’s mind of the expression of the Board’s sovereign will and displeasure. Scott, without due consideration, thought it so preyed on his peace as to render him desperate—and has said “ that from the moment his hopes of promotion were utterly blasted, his tendency to dissipation hurried him precipitately into those excesses which shortened his life.” Lockhart, on the authority of Mr. Findlater, dissents from that statement ; Allan Cunningham thinks it in essentials true, and that Burns’s letter to Erskine of Mar, “ covers the Board of Excise and the British Government of that day with eternal shame.” Whatever may have been the effect of those proceedings on Burns’s mind, it is certain that the freedom with which he gave utterance to his political opinions and sentiments seriously injured him in the estimation of multitudes of excellent people who thought them akin to doctrines subversive of all government but that of the mob. Nor till he joined the Dumfries Volunteers, and as their Laureate issued his popular song, that flew over the land like wild-fire, “ Does haughty Gaul invasion threat ?” was he generally regarded as a loyal subject. For two or three years he had been looked on with evil eyes, and spoken of in evil whispers by too many of the good, and he had himself in no small measure to blame for their false judgment of his character. Here are a few of his lines to “ The Tree of Liberty : ”

“ But vicious folk aye hate to see
The works of virtue thrive, man ;
The courtly vermin bann’d the tree,
And grat to see it thrive, man.

King Louis thought to cut it down,
 When it was unco sma', man ;
 For this the watchman crack'd his crown,
 Cut aff his head and a', man.

“ Let Britain boast her hardy oak,
 Her poplar and her pine, man,
 Auld Britain ance could crack her joke,
 And o'er her neighbor shine, man.
 But seek the forest round and round,
 And soon 't will be agreed, man,
 That sic a tree cannot be found
 'Twixt London and the Tweed, man.

“ Wae worth the loon wha woudna eat
 Sic wholesome dainty cheer, man ;
 I'd sell my shoon frae aff my feet
 To taste sic fruit I swear, man.
 Syne let us pray, auld England may
 Soon plant this far-fam'd tree, man ;
 And blithe we'll sing, and hail the day
 That gave us liberty, man.”

So sunk in slavery at this time was Scotland, that England could not sleep in her bed till she had set her sister free—and sent down some liberators who narrowly escaped getting hanged by this most ungrateful country. Such “perilous stuff” as the above might have been indited by Palmer, Gerald, or Margaret—how all unworthy of the noble Burns? Of all men then in the world, the author of “The Cottar's Saturday Night” was by nature the least of a Jacobin. We cannot help thinking that, like Byron, he loved at times to astonish dull people by daring things, to see how they looked with their hair on end; and dull people—who are not seldom malignant—taking him at his word, had their revenge in charging him with all manner of profligacy, and fabricating vile stories to his disgrace; there being nothing too gross for the swallow of political rancor.

It is proved by many very strong expressions in his correspondence—that the reproof he received from the Board of Excise sorely troubled him; and no doubt it had an evil influence on public opinion that did not subside till it was feared he was dying, and that ceased for a time only with his death. We have

expressed our indignation—our contempt of that tyrannical treatment ; and have not withheld our respect—our admiration from the characteristic manliness with which he repelled the accusations some insidious enemies had secretly sent in to the quarter where they knew fatal injury might be done to all his prospects in life. But was it possible that his most unguarded, rash, and we do not for a moment hesitate to say, blameable expression of political opinions adverse to those maintained by all men friendly to the government, could be permitted to pass without notice ? He had no right to encourage what the government sought to put down, while he was “their servant in a very humble department ;” and though he successfully repelled the slanders of the despicable creatures who strove to destroy him, even in his high-spirited letter to Erskine there is enough to show that he had entered into such an expostulation with the Board as must have excited strong displeasure and disapproval, which no person of sense, looking back on those most dangerous times, can either wonder at or blame. He says in his defence before the Board, “ I stated that, where I must declare my sentiments, I would say there existed a system of corruption between the executive power and the representative part of the legislature, which boded no good to our glorious constitution, and which every patriotic Briton must wish to see amended.” From a person in his situation even such a declaration was not prudent, and prudence was a duty ; but it is manifest from what he adds for Erskine’s own ear, that something more lay concealed in those generalities than the mere words seem to imply. “ I have three sons, who I see already have brought into the world souls ill qualified to inhabit the bodies of SLAVES. Can I look tamely on, and see any machinations to wrest from them the birthright of my boys—the little independent Britons, in whose veins runs my blood ? No ; I will not, should my heart’s blood stream around my attempt to defend it. Does any man tell me, that my poor efforts can be of no service, and that it does not belong to my humble station to meddle with the concerns of a nation ? ” Right or wrong—and we think they were right—the government of the country had resolved to uphold principles, to which the man who could not refrain from thus

fiercely declaring himself, at the very time all that was dearest to him was in peril, could not but be held hostile ; and so far from its being their duty to overlook such opinions, because they were the opinions of Burns, it was just because they were the opinions of Burns that it was their duty to restrain and reprove them. He continued too long after this to be by far too outspoken—as we have seen ; but that his Scottish soul had in aught become Frenchified, we never shall believe, but while we live shall attribute the obstinacy with which he persisted to sing and say the praises of that people, after they had murdered their King and their Queen, and had been guilty of all enormities, in a great measure to a haughtiness that could not brook to retract opinions he had offensively declared before the faces of many whom not without reason he despised—to a horror of the idea of any sacrifice of that independent spirit which was the very life of his life. Burns had been insulted by those who were at once his superiors and his inferiors, and shall Burns truckle to “the powers that be ?” At any bidding but that of his own conviction swerve a hair’s-breadth from his political creed ? No : not even though his reason had told him that some of its articles were based in delusion, and if carried into practice among his own countrymen, pursuant to the plots of traitors, who were indeed aliens in soul to the land he loved, would have led to the destruction of that liberty for which he, by the side or at the head of his cottage compatriots, would have gladly died.

The evil consequences of all this to Burns were worse than you may have imagined, for over and above the lies springing up like puddock-stools from domestic middens, an ephemeral brood indeed, but by succession perennial, and that even now when you grasp them in your hand, spatter vileness in your eyes, like so many devil’s snuff-boxes—think how injurious to the happiness of such a soul as his, to all its natural habitudes, must have been the feuds carried on all around him, and in which he with his commanding powers too largely mingled, between political parties in a provincial town, contending as they thought, the one for hearths and altars, the other for regeneration of those principles, decayed or dead, which alone make hearths and altars sacred,

and their defence worth the tears and the blood of brave men who would fain be free. His sympathy was “wide and general as the casing air;” and not without violence could it be contracted “within the circle none dared tread but they,” who thought William Pitt the reproach, and Charles Fox the Paragon of Animals. Within that circle he met with many good men, the Herons, Millers, Riddells, Maxwells, Symes, and so forth ; within it too he forgathered with many “a fool and something more.” Now up to “the golden exhalation of the dawn” of his gaugership, Burns had been a Tory, and he heard in “the whisper of a faction” a word unpleasing to a Whiggish ear, turncoat. The charge was false, and he disdained it ; but disdain in eyes that when kindled up burned like carriage lamps in a dark night, frightened the whispering faction into such animosity, that a more than usual sumph produced an avenging epigram upon him and two other traitors, in which the artist committed a mistake of workmanship no subsequent care could rectify : instead of hitting the right nail on the head, why he hit the wrong nail on the point, so no wooden mallet could drive it home. From how much social pleasure must not Burns have thus been wilfully self-debarred ! From how many happy friendships ! By nature he was not vindictive, yet occasionally he seemed to be so, visiting slight offence with severe punishment, sometimes imagining offence when there was none, and in a few instances, we fear, satirizing in savage verses not only the innocent, but the virtuous ; the very beings whom, had he but known them as he might, he would have loved and revered—celebrated them living or dead in odes, elegies, and hymns—thereby doing holy service to goodness in holding up shining examples to all who longed to do well. Most of his intolerant scorn of high rank had the same origin—not in his own nature, which was noble, but in prejudices thus superinduced upon it which in their virulence were mean—though his genius could clothe them in magnificent diction, and so justify them to the proud poet’s heart.

It is seldom indeed that Lockhart misses the mark ; but in one instance—an anecdote—where it is intended to present the pathetic, our eyes perceive but the picturesque—we allude to the tale told him by Davie Macculloch, son of the Laird of Ardwall.

"He told me that he was seldom more grieved than when, riding into Dumfries one fine summer's evening to attend a county ball, he saw Burns walking alone on the shady side of the principal street of the town, while the opposite part was gay with successive groups of gentlemen and ladies, all drawn together for the festivities of the night, not one of whom appeared willing to recognize him. The horseman dismounted and joined Burns, who on his proposing to him to cross the street, said, 'Nay, my young friend, that is all over now,' and quoted, after a pause, some verses of Lady Grizell Baillie's pathetic ballad beginning, 'The bonnet stood ance sae fair on his brow,' and ending '*And were na my heart light I wad die.*' It was little in Burns's character to let his feelings on certain subjects escape in this fashion. He, immediately after citing these verses, assumed the sprightliness of his most pleasing manner; and taking his young friend home with him, entertained him very agreeably until the hour of the ball arrived, with a bowl of his usual potation, and bonnie Jean's singing of some verses which he had recently composed." "Tis a pretty picture in the style of Watteau. "The opposite part gay with successive groups of gentlemen and ladies, all drawn together for the festivities of the night." What were they about, and where were they going? Were they as yet in their ordinary clothes, colts and fillies alike, taking their exercise preparatory to the country-dances of some thirty or forty couple, that in those days used to try the wind of both sexes? If so, they might have chosen better training-ground along the banks of the Nith. Were they all in full fig, the females with feathers on their heads, the males with chapeaux bas—"stepping westward" arm in arm, in successive groups, to the Assembly-room? In whichever of these two pleasant predicaments they were placed, it showed rare perspicacity in Daintie Davie to discern that not one of them appeared willing to recognize Burns—more especially as he was walking on the other and shady side of the street, and Davie on horseback. By what secret signs did the fair free-masons—for such there be—express to their mounted brother their unwillingness to recognize from the sunshine of their promenade, the gauger walking alone in the shade of his? Was flirtation at so low an

ebb in Dumfries-shire, that the flower of her beaux and belles, "in successive groups, drawn together for the festivities of the night," could find eyes for a disagreeable object so many yards of causeway remote? And if Burns observed that they gave him the cold shoulder—cut him across the street—on what recondite principle of conduct did he continue to walk there, in place of stalking off with a frown to his *Howf*? And is it high Galloway to propose to a friend to cross the street to do the civil "to successive groups of gentlemen and ladies, not one of whom had appeared willing to recognize him?" However it was gallant under such discouragement to patronize the gauger; and we trust that the "wicked wee bowl," while it detained from, and disinclined to, did not incapacitate for the Ball.

But whence all those expressions so frequent in his correspondence, and not rare in his poetry, of self-reproach and rueful remorse? From a source that lay deeper than our eyes can reach. We know his worst sins, but cannot know his sorrows. The war between the spirit and the flesh often raged in his nature—as in that of the best of beings who are made—and no Christian, without humblest self-abasement, will ever read his Confessions.

" Is there a whim-inspired fool,
Owre fast for thought, owre hot for rule,
Owre blate to seek, owre proud to snool,
Let him draw near;
And owre this grassy heap sing dool,
And drap a tear.

" Is there a bard of rustic song,
Who, noteless, steals the crowds among,
That weekly this area throng,
O, pass not by!
But with a frater-feeling strong,
Here, heave a sigh.

" Is there a man, whose judgment clear,
Can others teach the course to steer,
Yet runs himself life's mad career,
Wild as the wave;

Here pause—and, thro' the starting tear,
Survey this grave.

“The poor inhabitant below
Was quick to learn, and wise to know,
And keenly felt the friendly glow,
 And softer flame;
But thoughtless follies laid him low,
 And stain'd his name!

“ Reader, attend—whether thy soul
Soars fancy's flights beyond the pole,
Or darkling grubs this earthly hole,
 In low pursuit;
Know, prudent, cautious, self-control,
 Is wisdom's root.”

A Bard's Epitaph ! Such his character drawn by himself in deepest despondency—in distraction—in despair calmed while he was composing it by the tranquillizing power that ever accompanies the action of genius. And shall we judge him as severely as he judged himself, and think worse of him than of common men, because he has immortalized his frailties in his contrition ? The sins of common men are not remembered in their epitaphs. Silence is a privilege of the grave few seek to disturb. If there must be no eulogium, our name and age suffice for that stone—and whatever may have been thought of us, there are some to drop a tear on our “*forlorn hic jacet.*” Burns wrote those lines in the very prime of youthful manhood. You know what produced them—his miserable attachment to her who became his wife. He was then indeed most miserable—afterwards most happy ; he cared not then though he should die—all his other offences rose against him in that agony ; and how humbly he speaks of his high endowments, under a sense of the sins by which they had been debased ! He repented, and sinned again and again ; for his repentance—though sincere—was not permanent ; yet who shall say that it was not accepted at last ? “*Owre this grassy heap sing dool, and drap a tear,*” is an injunction that has been obeyed by many a pitying heart. Yet a little while, and his Jean buried him in such a grave. A few years more, and a mausoleum was erected by the nation for

his honored dust. Now husband and wife lie side by side—"in hopes of a joyful resurrection."

Burns belonged to that order of prevailing poets, with whom "all thoughts, all passions, all delights" possess not that entire satisfaction nature intends, till they effuse themselves abroad, for sake of the sympathy that binds them, even in uttermost solitude, to the brotherhood of man. No secrets have they that words can reveal. They desire that the whole race shall see their very souls—shall hear the very beatings of their hearts. Thus they hope to live for ever in kindred bosoms. They feel that a greater power is given them in their miseries—for what miseries has any man ever harbored in the recesses of his spirit, that he has not shared, and will share, with "numbers without number numberless" till the Judgment Day !

Who reads unmoved such sentences as these ? "The fates and characters of the rhyming tribe often employ my thoughts when I am disposed to be melancholy. There is not, among all the martyrologies that ever were penned, so woeful a narrative as the lives of the Poets. In the comparative view of wretches, the question is not what they are doomed to suffer, but how they are formed to bear !" Long before the light of heaven had ever been darkened or obscured in his conscience by evil thoughts or evil deeds, when the bold bright boy, with his thick black clustering hair ennobling his ample forehead, was slaving for his parents' sakes—Robert used often to lie by Gilbert's side all night long without ever closing an eye in sleep ; for that large heart of his, that loved all his eyes looked upon of nature's works living or dead, perfect as was its mechanism for the play of all lofty passions, would get suddenly disarranged, as if approached the very hour of death. Who will say that many more years were likely to have fallen to the lot of one so framed, had he all life long drunk, as in youth, but of the well-water—"laid down with the dove, and risen with the lark !" If excesses in which there was vice and therefore blame, did injure his health, how far more those other excesses in which there was so much virtue, and on which there should be praise for ever ! Over-anxious, over-working hours beneath the mid-day sun, and sometimes to save a scanty crop beneath

the midnight moon, to which he looked up without knowing it with a poet's eyes, as he kept forking the sheaves on the high laden cart that "Hesperus, who led the starry host" beheld crashing into the barn-yard among shouts of "Harvest Home."

It has been thought that there are not a few prominent points of character common to Burns and Byron ; and though no formal comparison between them has been drawn that we know of, nor would it be worth while attempting it, as not much would come of it, we suspect, without violent stretching and bending of materials, and that free play of fancy which makes no bones of facts, still there is this resemblance, that they both give unreserved expositions of their most secret feelings, undeterred by any fear of offending others, or of bringing censure on themselves by such revelations of the inner man. Byron as a moral being was below Burns ; and there is too often much affectation and insincerity in his Confessions. "Fare thee well, and if for ever, still for ever fare thee well," is not elegiac, but satirical ; a complaint in which the bitterness is not of grief, but of gall ; how unlike "The Lament on the unfortunate issue of a Friend's Amour" overflowing with the expression of every passion cognate with love's despair ! Do not be startled by our asking you to think for a little while of Robert Burns along with—SAMUEL JOHNSON. Listen to him, and you hear as wise and good a man as earth ever saw for ever reproaching himself with his wickedness ; "from almost the earliest time he could remember he had been forming schemes for a better life." Select from his notes, prayers, and diaries, and from the authentic records of his oral discourse, all acknowledgments of his evil thoughts, practices, and habits ; all charges brought against him by conscience, of sins of omission and commission ; all declarations, exclamations, and interjections of agonizing remorse and gloomy despair—from *them* write his character in his epitaph—and look *there* on the Christian Sage ! God forbid ! that saving truths should be so changed into destroying falsehoods. Slothful, selfish, sensual, envious, uncharitable, undutiful to his parents, thoughtless of Him who died to save sinners, and living without God in the world ;—*That* is the wretched being named Samuel Johnson—in the eyes of his idolatrous

countrymen only a little lower than the angels—in his own a worm ! Slothful ! yet how various his knowledge ! acquired by fits and snatches—book in hand, and poring as if nearly sand-blind—yet with eyes in their own range of vision, keen as the lynx's or the eagle's—on pages no better than blanks to common minds, to his hieroglyphical of wisest secrets—or in long assiduity of continuous studies, of which a month to him availed more than to you or us a year—or all we have had of life. Selfish ! with obscure people, about whom nobody cared, provided for out of his slender means within doors, paupers though they thought it not, and though meanly endowed by nature as by fortune, admitted into the friendship of a Sage simple as a child—out of doors, pensioners waiting for him at the corners of streets, of whom he knew little, but that they were hungry and wanted bread, and probably had been brought by sin to sorrow. Sensual ! Because his big body, getting old, "needed repairs," and because though "Rasselas Prince of Abyssinia" had been written on an empty stomach, which happened when he was comparatively young and could not help it, now that he had reached his grand climacteric, he was determined to show not to the whole world, but to large parties, that all the fat of the earth was not meant for the mouths of blockheads. Envious ! of David Garrick ? Poh ! poh ! Pshaw ! pshaw ! Uncharitable ? We have disposed of that clause of the verse in our commentary on "selfish." Undutiful to his parents ! He did all man could to support his mother ; and having once disengaged his father by sulkily refusing to assist at his book-stall, half a century afterwards, more or less, when at the head of English literature, and the friend of Burke and Beauclerk, he stood bareheaded for an hour in the rain on the site of said book-stall, in the market-place of Litchfield, in penance for that great sin. As to the last two charges in the indictment—if he was not a Christian, who can hope for salvation in the Cross ? If his life was that of an atheist, who of woman born ever walked with God ? Yet it is true he was a great sinner. "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us ; but if we confess our sins,

he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Burns died in his thirty-eighth year. At that age what had Johnson done to be for ever remembered? He had written Irene, London, and the Life of Savage. Of Irene the world makes little account—it contains many just and noble sentiments—but it is a Tragedy without tears. The Life is an eloquent lie, told in the delusion of a friendship sealed by participated sorrows. LONDON is a satire of the true moral vein—more sincerely indignant with the vices it withers than its prototype in Juvenal—with all the vigor, without any of the coarseness of Dryden—with "the pointed propriety of Pope," and versification almost as musical as his, while not so monotonous—an immortal strain. But had he died in 1747, how slight had been our knowledge—our interest how dull—in the "Life and Writings of Samuel Johnson!" How slight our knowledge! We should never have known that in childhood he showed symptoms "of that jealous independence of spirit and impetuosity of temper which never forsook him"—as Burns in the same season had showed that "stubborn sturdy something in his disposition" which was there to the last;—That he displayed then "that power of memory for which he was all his life eminent to a degree almost incredible"—as Burns possessed that faculty—so thought Murdoch—in more strength than imagination;—That he never joined the other boys in their ordinary diversions "but would wander away into the fields talking to himself"—like Burns walking miles "to pay his respects to the Leglen wood;"—That when a boy he was immoderately fond of reading romances of chivalry—as Burns was of Blind Harry;—That he fell into "an inattention to religion or an indifference about it in his ninth year," and after his fourteenth "became a sort of lax *talker* against religion, for he did not much *think* about it, and this lasted till he went to Oxford, where it would not be *suffered*"—just as the child Burns was remarkable for an "enthusiastic idiot piety," and had pleasure during some years of his youth in puzzling his companions on points in divinity, till he saw his folly, and without getting his mouth shut, was mute;—That on his return home from Stourbridge school in his eighteenth year "he had no set-

tled plan of life, nor looked forward at all, but merely lived from day to day"—like Burns who, when a year or two older in his perplexity, writes to his father that he knows not what to do, and is sick of life;—That his love of literature was excited by accidentally finding a folio of Petrarch—as Burns's love of poetry was by an octavo Shenstone;—That he thereon became a glut-tonous book-devourer—as Burns did—"no book being so volu-minous as to slacken his industry, or so antiquated as to damp his researches;"—That in his twentieth year he felt himself "overwhelmed with a horrible hypochondria, with perpetual irri-tation, fretfulness, and impatience, and with a dejection, gloom, and despair which rendered existence misery"—as Burns tells us he was afflicted—even earlier—and to the last—"with a con-stitutional melancholy or hypochondriasm that made me fly to solitude"—with horrid flutterings and stoppages of the heart that often almost choked him, so that he had to fall out of bed into a tub of water to allay the anguish;—That he was at Pembroke College "caressed and loved by all about him as a gay and fro-lesome fellow"—while "ah! Sir, I was mad and violent—it was bitterness which they mistook for frolic"—just as Burns was thought to be "with his strong appetite for sociality as well from native hilarity as from a pride of observation and remark," though when left alone desponding and distracted;—That he was generally seen lounging at the College gate, with a circle of stu-dents round him, whom he was entertaining with wit, and keep-ing from their studies, if not spiriting them up to rebellion against the College discipline, which in his maturer years he so much extolled"—as Burns was sometimes seen at the door of a Public ridiculing the candles of the Auld Light and even spirit-ing the callants against the Kirk itself, which we trust he looked on more kindly in future years;—That he had to quit college on his father's bankruptcy soon followed by death, as Burns in similar circumstances had to quit Lochlea;—"That in the forlorn state of his circumstances, *Ætat.* 23, he accepted of an offer to be employed as usher in the school of Market-Bosworth," where he was miserable—just as Burns was at the same age, not indeed flogging boys but flailing barns, "a poor insignificant devil, un-noticed and unknown, and stalking up and down fairs and mar-

kets :—That soon after “he published proposals for printing by subscription the Latin Poems of Politian at two shillings and sixpence, but that there were not subscribers enough to secure a sufficient sale, so the work never appeared, and probably never was executed”—as Burns soon after issued proposals for printing by subscription on terms rather higher “among others the Ordination, Scotch Drink, the Cottar’s Saturday Night, and an Address to the Deil,” which volume ere long was published accordingly and had a great sale ;—That he had, “from early youth, been sensible to the influence of female charms, and when at Stourbridge school was much enamored of Olivia Lloyd, a young Quaker, to whom he wrote a copy of verses”—just as Burns was—and did—in the case of Margaret Thomson, in the kale-yard at Kirkoswald, and of many others ;—That his “juvenile attachments to the fair sex were however very transient, and it is certain that he formed no criminal connection whatever ; Mr. Hector, who lived with him in the utmost intimacy and social freedom, having assured me that even at that ardent season his conduct was strictly virtuous in that respect”—just so with Burns who fell in love with every lass he saw “come wading barefoot all alone,” while his brother Gilbert gives us the same assurance of his continence in all his youthful loves ;—That “in a man whom religious education has saved from licentious indulgences, the passion of love when once it has seized him is exceeding strong, and this was experienced by Johnson when he became the fervent admirer of Mrs. Porter after her first husband’s death”—as it was unfortunately too much the case with Burns, though he did not marry a widow double his own age—but one who was a Maid till she met Rob Mossiel—and some six years younger than himself ;—That unable to find subsistence in his native place, or anywhere else, he was driven by want to try his fortune in London, “the great field of genius and exertion, where talents of every kind have the fullest scope, and the highest encouragement,” on his way thither, “riding and tying” with Davie Garrick—just as Burns was impelled to make an experiment on Edinburgh, journeying thither on foot, but without any companion in his adventure ;—that after getting on there judiciously well, he returned “in the course of the

next summer to Lichfield, where he had left Mrs. Johnson," and stayed there three weeks, his mother asking him whether, when in London, "He was one of those who gave the wall or those who took it"—just as Burns returned to Mauchline, where he had left Mrs. Burns, and remained in the neighborhood about the same period of time, his mother having said to him on his return, "O, Robert;"—That he took his wife back with him to London, resolving to support her the best way he could, by the cultivation of the fields of literature, and chiefly through an engagement as gauger and supervisor to Cave's Magazine—as Burns, with similar purposes, and not dissimilar means, brought his wife to Ellisland, then to Dumfries;—That partly from necessity and partly from inclination, he used to perambulate the streets of the city at all hours of the night, and was far from being prim or precise in his company, associating much with one Savage at least who had rubbed shoulders with the gallows—just as Burns on Jenny Geddes and her successor kept skirring the country at all hours, though we do not hear of any of his companions having been stabbers in brothel-brawls;—That on the publication of his "London," that city rang with applause, and Pope pronounced the author—yet anonymous—a true poet, who would soon be *détrillé*, while General Oglethorpe became his patron, and such a prodigious sensation did his genius make, that in the fulness of his fame, Earl Gower did what he could to set him on the way of being elevated to a schoolmastership in some small village in Shropshire or Staffordshire, "of which the certain salary was *sixty pounds a-year, which would make him happy for life*"—so said English Earl Gower to an Irish Dean called Jonathan Swift—just as Burns soon after the publication of "Tam o' Shanter," was in great favor with Captain Grose—though there was then no need for any poet to tell the world he was one, as he had been "*détrillé* a year or two before, and by the unexampled exertions of Grahame of Fintry, the Earl of Glencairn being oblivious or dead, was translated to the diocese of Dumfries, where he died in the thirty-eighth year of his age; the very year, we believe, of *his*, in which Johnson issued the prospectus of his Dictionary;—and here we leave the Lexicographer for a

moment to himself, and let our mind again be occupied for a moment exclusively by the Exciseman.

You will not suppose that we seriously insist on this parallel as if the lines throughout ran straight ; or that we are not well aware that there was far from being in reality such complete correspondence of the circumstances—much less the characters of the men. But both had to struggle for their very lives—it was sink or swim—and by their own buoyancy they were borne up. In Johnson's case, there is not one dark stain on the story of all those melancholy and memorable years. Hawkins indeed more than insinuates that there was a separation between him and his wife, at the time he associated with Savage, and used with that profligate to stroll the streets ; and that she was “ harbored by a friend near the Tower ;” but Croker justly remarks—“ That there never has existed any human being, all the details of whose life, all the motives of whose actions, all the thoughts of whose mind, have been so unreservedly brought before the public ; even his prayers, his most secret meditations, and his most scrupulous self-reproaches, have been laid before the world ; and there is not to be found, in all the unparalleled information thus laid before us, a single trace to justify the accusation which Hawkins so wantonly and so odiously, and it may be assumed, so falsely makes.” However, he walked in the midst of evil—he was familiar with the faces of the wicked—the guilty, as they were passing by, he did not always shun, as if they were lepers ; he had a word for them—poor as he was, a small coin—for they were of the unfortunate and forlorn, and his heart was pitiful. So was that of Burns. Very many years Heaven allotted to the Sage, that virtue might be instructed by wisdom—all the good acknowledge that he is great—and his memory is hallowed for evermore in the gratitude of Christendom. In his prime it pleased God to cut off the Poet—but his genius too has left a blessing to his own people—and has diffused noble thoughts, generous sentiments, and tender feelings over many lands, and most of all among them who more especially feel that they are his brethren, the Poor who make the Rich, and like him are happy, in spite of its hardships, in their own condition. Let the imperfections of his character then be spared, if it be even

for the sake of his genius ; on higher grounds let it be honored ; for if there was much weakness, its strength was mighty, and his *religious* country is privileged to forget his frailties, in humble trust that they are forgiven.

We have said but little hitherto of Burns's religion. Some have denied that he had any religion at all—a rash and cruel denial—made in the face of his genius, his character, and his life. What man in his senses ever lived without religion ? “The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God”—was Burns an atheist ? We do not fear to say that he was religious far beyond the common run of men, even them who may have had a more consistent and better considered creed. The lessons he received in the “auld clay biggin” were not forgotten through life. He speaks—and we believe him—of his “early ingrained piety” having been long remembered to good purpose—what he called his “idiot piety”—not meaning thereby to disparage it, but merely that it was in childhood an instinct. “Our Father which art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name !” is breathed from the lips of infancy with the same feeling at its heart that beats towards its father on earth, as it kneels in prayer by his side. No one surely will doubt his sincerity when he writes from Irvine to his father—“Honor'd sir—I am quite transported at the thought, that e'er long, perhaps soon, I shall bid an eternal adieu to all the pains, and uneasinesses, and disquietudes of this weary life ; for I assure you I am heartily tired of it, and, if I do not very much deceive myself, I could contentedly and gladly resign it. It is for this reason I am more pleased with the 15th, 16th, and 17th verses of the 7th chapter of Revelations, than with any ten times as many verses in the whole Bible, and would not exchange the noble enthusiasm with which they inspire me, for all that this world has to offer. ‘15. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple ; and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. 16. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more ; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. 17. For the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters ; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.’” When he gives lessons to a young man for

his conduct in life, one of them is, “The great Creator to adore ;” when he consoles a friend on the death of a relative, “he points the brimful grief-worn eyes to scenes beyond the grave ;” when he expresses benevolence to a distressed family, he beseeches the aid of Him “who tempers the wind to the shorn lamb ;” when he feels the need of aid to control his passions, he implores that of the “Great Governor of all below ;” when in sickness, he has a prayer for the pardon of all his errors, and an expression of confidence in the goodness of God ; when suffering from the ills of life, he asks for the grace of resignation, “because they are thy will ;” when he observes the sufferings of the virtuous, he remembers a rectifying futurity ;—he is religious not only when surprised by occasions such as these, but also on set occasions ; he had regular worship in his family while at Ellisland—we know not how it was at Dumfries, but we do know that there he catechised his children every Sabbath evening ;—Nay, he does not enter a Druidical circle without a prayer to God.

He viewed the Creator chiefly in his attributes of love, goodness, and mercy. “In proportion as we are wrung with grief, or distracted with anxiety, the ideas of a superintending Deity, an Almighty protector, are doubly dear.” Him he never lost sight of, or confidence in, even in the depths of his remorse. An avenging God was too seldom in his contemplations—from the little severity in his own character—from a philosophical view of the inscrutable causes of human frailty—and most of all, from a diseased aversion to what was so much the theme of the sour Calvinism around him ; but which would have risen up an appalling truth in such a soul as his, had it been habituated to profounder thought on the mysterious corruption of our fallen nature.

Sceptical thoughts as to revealed religion had assailed his mind, while with expanding powers it “communed with the glorious universe ;” and in 1787 he writes from Edinburgh to a “Mr. James M'Candlish, student in physic, College, Glasgow,” who had favored him with a long argumentative infidel letter, “I, likewise, since you and I were first acquainted, in the pride of despising old women’s stories, ventured on ‘the daring path

Spinoza trod ;' but experience of the weakness, not the strength of human powers, *made me glad to grasp at revealed religion.*" When at Ellisland, he writes to Mrs. Dunlop, " My idle reasonings sometimes make me a little sceptical, but the necessities of my heart always give the cold philosophizings the lie. Who looks for the heart weaned from earth ; the soul affianced to her God ; the correspondence fixed with heaven ; the pious supplication and devout thanksgiving, constant as the vicissitudes of even and morn ; who thinks to meet with these in the court, the palace, in the glare of public life ! No : to find them in their precious importance and divine efficacy, we must search among the obscure recesses of disappointment, affliction, poverty, and distress." And again, next year, from the same place to the same correspondent, " That there is an incomprehensibly Great Being, to whom I owe my existence, and that he must be intimately acquainted with the operations and progress of the internal machinery, and consequent outward deportment of this creature he has made—these are, I think, self-evident propositions. That there is a real and eternal distinction between vice and virtue, and consequently, that I am an accountable creature ; that from the seeming nature of the human mind, as well as from the evident imperfection, nay positive injustice, in the administration of affairs, both in the natural and moral worlds, there must be a retributive sense of existence beyond the grave, must, I think, be allowed by every one who will give himself a moment's reflection. I will go farther and affirm, that from the sublimity, excellence, and purity of his doctrine and precepts, unparalleled by all the aggregated wisdom and learning of many preceding ages, though *to appearance* he was himself the obscurest and most illiterate of our species : therefore Jesus was from God." Indeed, all his best letters to Mrs. Dunlop are full of the expression of religious feeling and religious faith ; though it must be confessed with pain, that he speaks with more confidence in the truth of natural than of revealed religion, and too often lets sentiments inadvertently escape him, that, taken by themselves, would imply that his religious belief was but a Christianized Theism. Of the immortality of the soul, he never expresses any serious doubt, though now and then, his expressions, though

beautiful, want their usual force, as if he felt the inadequacy of the human mind to the magnitude of the theme. “ Ye venerable sages, and holy flamens, is there probability in your conjectures, truth in your stories, of another world beyond death; or are they all alike baseless visions and fabricated fables? If there is another life, it must be only for the just, the amiable, and the humane. What a flattering idea this of the world to come! Would to God I as firmly believed it as I ardently wish it.”

How, then, could honored Thomas Carlyle bring himself to affirm, “ that Burns had no religion ?” His religion was in much imperfect—but its incompleteness you discern only on a survey of all his effusions, and by inference; for his particular expressions of a religious kind are genuine, and as acknowledgments of the superabundant goodness and greatness of God, they are in unison with the sentiments of the devoutest Christian. But remorse never suggests to him the inevitable corruption of man; Christian humility he too seldom dwells on, though without it there cannot be Christian faith; and he is silent on the need of reconciliation between the divine attributes of Justice and Mercy. The absence of all this might pass unnoticed, were not the religious sentiment so prevalent in his confidential communications with his friends in his most serious and solemn moods. In them there is frequent, habitual recognition of the Creator; and who that finds joy and beauty in nature has not the same? It may be well supposed that if common men are more ideal in religion than in other things, so would be Burns. He who has lent the colors of his fancy to common things, would not withhold them from divine. Something—he knew not what—he would exact of man—more impressively reverential than anything he is wont to offer to God, or perhaps can offer in the way of institution—in temples made with hands. The *heartfelt* adoration always has a grace for him—in the silent bosom—in the lonely cottage—in any place where circumstances are a pledge of its reality; but the moment it ceases to be *heartfelt*, and visibly so, it loses his respect, it seems as profanation. “ Mine is the religion of the breast;” and if it be not, what is it worth? But it must also revive a right spirit within us; and there may be gratitude for goodness, without such change as is

required of us in the gospel. He was too buoyant with immortal spirit within him not to credit its immortal destination ; he was too thoughtful in his human love not to feel how different must be our affections if they are towards flowers which the blast of death may wither, or towards spirits which are but beginning to live in our sight, and are gathering good and evil here for an eternal life. Burns believed that by his own unassisted understanding, and his own unassisted heart, he saw and felt those great truths, forgetful of this great truth, that he had been taught them in the Written Word. Had all he learned in the “auld clay biggin” become a blank—all the knowledge inspired into his heart during the evenings, when “the sire turned o'er wi' patriarchal air, the big ha'-bible, ance his father's pride,” how little or how much would he then have known of God and Immortality ? In that delusion he shared more or less with one and all—whether poets or philosophers—who have put their trust in natural Theology. As to the glooms in which his sceptical reason had been involved, they do not seem to have been so thick—so dense—as in the case of men without number, who have, by the blessing of God, become true Christians. Of his levities on certain celebrations of religious rites, we before ventured an explanation ; and while it is to be lamented that he did not more frequently dedicate the genius that shed so holy a lustre over “The Cottar's Saturday Night,” to the service of religion, let it be remembered how few poets have done so—alas ! too few—that he, like his tuneful brethren, must often have been deterred by a sense of his own unworthiness from approaching its awful mysteries—and above all, that he was called to his account before he had attained his thoughtful prime.

And now that we are approaching the close of our Memoir, it may be well for a little while clearly to consider Burns's position in this world of ours, where we humans often find ourselves, we cannot tell how, in strange positions ; and where there are, on all hands, so many unintelligible things going on, that in all languages an active existence is assumed of such powers as Chance, Fortune, and Fate. Was he more unhappy than the generality of gifted men ? In what did that unhappiness consist ? How far was it owing to himself or others ?

We have seen, that up to early manhood his life was virtuous, and therefore must have been happy—that by magnanimously enduring a hard lot, he made it veritably a light one—and that though subject “to a constitutional melancholy or hypochondriasm that made him fly to solitude,” he enjoyed the society of his own humble sphere with proportionate enthusiasm, and even then derived deep delight from his genius. That genius quickly waxed strong, and very suddenly he was in full power as a poet. No sooner was passion indulged than it prevailed—and he who had so often felt during his abstinent sore-toiled youth that “a blink of rest’s a sweet enjoyment,” had now often to rue the self-brought trouble that banishes rest even from the bed of labor, whose sleep would otherwise be without a dream. “I have for some time been pining under secret wretchedness, from causes which you pretty well know—the pang of disappointment, the sting of pride, with some wandering stabs of remorse, which never fail to settle on my vitals like vultures, when attention is not called away by the calls of society, or the vagaries of the Muse.” These agonies had a well-known particular cause, but his errors were frequent and to his own eyes flagrant—yet he was no irreligious person—and exclaimed—“Oh ! thou great, unknown Power ! thou Almighty God ! who hast lighted up reason in my breast, and blessed me with immortality ! I have frequently wandered from that order and regularity necessary for the perfection of thy works, yet thou hast never left me nor forsaken me.” What signified it to him that he was then very poor ? The worst evils of poverty are moral evils, and them he then knew not ; nay, in that school he was trained to many virtues, which might not have been so conspicuous even in his noble nature, but for that severest nurture. Shall we ask, what signified it to him that he was very poor to the last ? Alas ! it signified much ; for when a poor man becomes a husband and a father, a new heart is created within him, and he often finds himself trembling in fits of unendurable, because unavailing fears. Of such anxieties Burns suffered much ; yet better men than Burns—better because sober and more religious—have suffered far more ; nor in their humility and resignation did they say even unto themselves “that God had given their share.”

His worst sufferings had their source in a region impenetrable to the visitations of mere worldly calamities ; and might have been even more direful, had his life basked in the beams of fortune, in place of being chilled in its shade. “ My mind my kingdom is ”—few men have had better title to make that boast than Burns ; but sometimes raged there *plus quam civilia bella*—and on the rebellious passions, no longer subjects, at times it seemed as if he cared not to impose peace.

Why, then, such clamor about his condition—such outcry about his circumstances—such horror of his Excisemanship ? Why should Scotland, on whose “ brow shame is ashamed to sit,” hang down her head when bethinking her of how she treated him ? Hers the glory of having *produced him* ; where lies the blame of his penury, his soul’s trouble, his living body’s emaciation, its untimely death ?

His country cried, “ All hail, mine own inspired Bard ! ” and his heart was in heaven. But heaven on earth is a mid-region not unvisited by storms. Divine indeed must be the descending light, but the ascending gloom may be dismal ; in imagination’s airy realms the Poet cannot forget he is a Man—his passions pursue him thither—and “ that mystical roof fretted with golden fire, why it appears no other thing to them than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapors.” The primeval curse is felt through all the regions of being ; and he who in the desire of fame having merged all other desires, finds himself on a sudden in its blaze, is disappointed of his spirit’s corresponding transport, without which it is but a glare ; and remembering the sweet calm of his obscurity, when it was enlivened not disturbed by soaring aspirations, would fain fly back to its secluded shades and be again his own lowly natural self in the privacy of his own humble birth-place. Something of this kind happened to Burns. He was soon sick of the dust and din that attended him on his illumined path ; and felt that he had been happier at Moss-giel than he ever was in the Metropolis—when but to relieve his heart of its pathos, he sung in the solitary field to the mountain daisy, than when to win applause, on the crowded street he chanted in ambitious strains—

“ Edina ! Scotia’s darling seat !
 All hail thy palaces and towers,
Where once beneath a monarch’s feet
 Sat legislation’s sov’reign powers !
From marking wildly-scatter’d flow’rs,
 As on the banks of Ayr I stray’d,
And singing, lone, the lingering hours,
 I shelter in thy honor’d shade.”

He returned to his natural condition, when he settled at Ellisland. Nor can we see what some have seen, any strong desire in him after preferment to a higher sphere. Such thoughts sometimes must have entered his mind, but they found no permanent dwelling there ; and he fell back, not only without pain, but with more than pleasure, on all the remembrances of his humble life. He resolved to pursue it in the same scenes, and the same occupations, and to continue to be what he had always been—a Farmer.

And why should the Caledonian Hunt have wished to divert or prevent him ? Why should Scotland ? What patronage, pray tell us, ought the Million and Two Thirds to have bestowed on their poet ? With five hundred pounds in the pockets of his buckskin breeches, perhaps he was about as rich as yourself—and then he had a mine—which we hope you have too—in his brain. Something no doubt *might* have been done for him, and if you insist that something *should*, we are not in the humor of argumentation, and shall merely observe that the opportunities to serve him were somewhat narrowed by the want of special preparation for any profession ; but supposing that nobody thought of promoting him, it was simply because everybody was thinking of getting promoted himself ; and though selfishness is very odious, not more so surely in Scotsmen than in other people, except indeed that more is expected from them on account of their superior intelligence and virtue.

Burns’s great calling here below was to illustrate the peasant life of Scotland. Ages may pass without another arising fit for that task ; meanwhile the whole pageant of Scottish life has passed away without a record. Let him remain, therefore, in the place which best fits him for the task, though it may not be

the best for his personal comfort. If an individual can serve his country at the expense of his comfort, he *must*, and others should not hinder him ; if self-sacrifice is required of him, they must not be blamed for permitting it. Burns followed his calling to the last, with more lets and hindrances than the friends of humanity could have wished ; but with a power that might have been weakened by his removal from what he loved and gloried in—by the disruption of his heart from its habits, and the breaking up of that custom which with many men becomes second nature, but which with him was corroboration and sanctification of the first, both being but one agency—its products how beautiful ! Like the flower and fruit of a tree that grows well only in its own soil, and by its own river.

But a *Gauger* ! What do we say to that ? Was it not most unworthy ? We ask, unworthy what ? You answer, his genius. But who expects the employments by which men live to be entirely worthy of their genius—congenial with their dispositions—suited to the structure of their souls ? It sometimes happens, but far oftener not—rarely in the case of poets, and most rarely of all in the case of such a poet as Burns. It is a law of nature that the things of the world come by honest industry, and that genius is its own reward, in the pleasure of its exertions and its applause. But who made Burns a gauger ? Himself. It was his own choice. “I have been feeling all the various rotations and movements within respecting the excise,” he writes to Aiken soon after the Kilmarnock edition. “There are many things plead strongly against it,” he adds, but these were all connected with his unfortunate private affairs ; to the calling itself he had no repugnance ; what he most feared was “the uncertainty of getting soon into business.” To Graham of Fintry he writes, a year after the Edinburgh edition, “Ye know, I dare say, of an application I lately made to your Board to be admitted an officer of excise. I have, according to form, been examined by a supervisor, and to-day I gave in two certificates, with a request for an order for instructions. In this affair, if I succeed, I am afraid I shall but too much need a patronizing friend. Propriety of conduct as a man, and fidelity and attention as an officer, I dare engage for ; *but with anything*

like business, except manual labor, I am totally unacquainted. * * I know, Sir, that to need your goodness is to have a claim on it ; may I therefore beg your patronage to forward me in this affair, till I be appointed to a division, where, by the help of rigid economy, I will try to support that independence so dear to my soul, but which has been too often distant from my situation." To Miss Chalmers he writes, " You will condemn me for the next step I have taken. I have entered into the excise. I have chosen this, my dear friend, after mature deliberation. The question is not at what door of fortune's palace we shall enter in, but what door does she open for us ? I got this without any hanging on, or mortifying solicitation : it is immediate support, and though poor in comparison of the last eighteen months of my existence, it is plenty in comparison of all my preceding life ; besides, the Commissioners are some of them my acquaintance, and all of them my firm friends." To Dr. Moore he writes, " There is still one thing would make me quite easy. I have an excise officer's commission, and I live in the midst of a country division. If I were very sanguine, I might hope that some of my great patrons might procure me a treasury warrant for supervisor, surveyor-general, &c." It is needless to multiply quotations to the same effect. Burns with his usual good sense took into account, in his own estimate of such a calling, not his genius, which had really nothing to do with it, but all his early circumstances, and his present prospects ; nor does it seem at any time to have been a source of much discomfort to himself ; on the contrary, he looks forward to an increase of its emoluments with hope and satisfaction. We are not now speaking of the disappointment of his hopes of rising in the profession, but of the profession itself : " A supervisor's income varies," he says, in a letter to Heron of that ilk, " from about a hundred and twenty to two hundred a year ; but the business is an incessant drudgery, and would be nearly a complete bar to every species of literary pursuit. The moment I am appointed supervisor, I may be nominated on the collector's list ; and this is always a business purely of political patronage. A collectorship varies much, from better than two hundred a year to near a thousand. They also come forward by precedence on the list ;

and have, besides a handsome income, a life of complete leisure. A life of literary leisure, with a decent competency, is the summit of my wishes." With such views, Burns became a gauger as well as a farmer; we can see no degradation in his having done so—no reason why whimpering cockneys should continually cry "Shame! shame! on Scotland" for having let "Bunns"—as they pronounce him—adopt his own mode of life. Allan Cunningham informs us that the officers of excise on the Nith were then a very superior set of men indeed to those who now ply on the Thames. Burns saw nothing to despise in honest men who did their duty; he could pick and choose among them; and you do not imagine that he was obliged to associate exclusively or intimately with ushers of the rod. Gaugers are gregarious, but not so gregarious as barristers and bagmen. The Club is composed of gauger, shop-keeper, schoolmaster, surgeon, retired merchant, minister, assistant-and-successor, cidevant militia captain, one of the heroes of the Peninsula with a wooden-leg, and haply a horse-marine. These are the ordinary members; but among the honorary you find men of high degree, squires of some thousands, and baronets of some hundreds a-year. The rise in that department has been sometimes so sudden as to astonish the unexcised. A gauger, of a very few years' standing, has been known, after a quarter's supervisorship, to ascend the collector's—and ere this planet had performed another revolution round the sun—the Comptroller's chair—from which he might well look down on the Chancellor of England.

Let it not be thought that we are running counter to the common feeling in what we have now been saying, nor blame us for speaking in a tone of levity on a serious subject. We cannot bear to hear people at one hour scorning the distinctions of rank, and acknowledging none but of worth; and at another whining for the sake of worth without rank, and estimating a man's happiness—which is something more than his respectability—by the amount of his income, or according to the calling from which it is derived. Such persons cannot have read Burns. Or do they think that such sentiments as "The rank is but the guinea stamp, the man's the gowd for a' that," are all very fine in verse,

but have no place in the prose of life, no application among men of sense to its concerns? But in how many departments have not men to addict themselves almost all their lives to the performance of duties, which, merely as acts or occupations, are in themselves as unintellectual as polishing a pin? Why, a pin-polisher may be a poet, who rounds its head an orator, who sharpens its point a metaphysician. Wait his time, and you hear the first singing like a nightingale in the autumnal season; the second roaring like a bull, and no mistake; the third, in wandering mazes lost, like a prisoner trying to thread the Cretan labyrinth without his clue. Let a man but have something that he must do or starve, nor be nice about its nature; and be ye under no alarm about the degradation of his soul. Let him even be a tailor; nay, that is carrying the principle too far; but any other handicraft let him for short hours—ten out of the eighteen (six he may sleep) for three score years and ten—assiduously cultivate, or if fate have placed him in a ropery, doggedly pursue; and if nature have given him genius, he will find time to instruct or enchant the world; if but goodness, time to benefit it by his example, “though never heard of half a mile from home.”

Who in this country, if you except an occasional statesman, take their places at once in the highest grade of their calling? In the learned professions, what obscurest toil must not the brightest go through! Under what a pressure of mean observances the proudest stoop their heads! The color-ensign in a black regiment has risen to be colonel in the Rifle-brigade. The middy in a gun-brig on the African station has commanded a three-decker at Trafalgar. Through successive grades they must all go—the armed and the gowned alike; the great law of advancement holds among men of noble and of ignoble birth, not without exceptions indeed in favor of family, and of fortune too, more or less frequent, more or less flagrant—but talent, and integrity, and honor, and learning, and genius, are not often heard complaining of foul play; if you deny it, their triumph is the more glorious, for generally they win the day, and when they have won it—that is, risen in their profession, what becomes of them then? Soldiers or civilians, they must go where

they are ordered, in obedience to the same great law ; they appeal to their services when insisting on being sent—and in some pestilential climate swift death benumbs

“ Hands that the rod of empire might have sway’d—
Or wak’d to ecstasy the living lyre.”

It is drudgery to sit six, or eight, or ten hours a-day as a clerk in the India-house ; but Charles Lamb endured it for forty years, not without much headache and heartache too, we dare say ; but Elia shows us how the unwearied flame of genius can please itself by playing in the thickest gloom ; how fancy can people dreariest vacancy with rarest creatures holding communion in quaintest converse with the finest feelings of the thoughtful heart—how eyes dim with poring all day on a ledger, can glisten through the evening, and far on into the night, with those alternate visitings of humor and of pathos that for a while come and go as if from regions in the spirit separate and apart, but ere long by their quiet blending persuade us to believe that their sources are close adjacent, and that the streams, when left to themselves, often love to unite their courses, and to flow on together with merry or melancholy music, just as we choose to think it, as smiles may be the order of the hour, or as we may be commanded by the touch of some unknown power within us to indulge the luxury of tears.

Why, then, we ask again, such lamentation for the fate of Burns ? Why should not he have been left to make his own way in life like other men gifted or ungifted ? A man of great genius in the prime of life is poor. But his poverty did not for any long time necessarily affect the welfare or even comfort of the poet, and therefore created no obligation on his country to interfere with his lot. He was born and bred in an humble station—but such as it was, it did not impede his culture, fame, or service to his people, or rightly considered, his own happiness ; let him remain in it, or leave it as he will and can, but there was no obligation on others to take him out of it. He had already risen superior to circumstances—and would do so still ; his glory availed much in having conquered them ; give him

better, and the peculiar species of his glory will depart. Give him better, and it may be, that he achieves no more glory of any kind. For nothing is more uncertain than the effects of circumstances on character. Some men, we know, are specially adapted to adverse circumstances, rising thereby as the kite rises to the adverse breeze, and falling when the adversity ceases. Such was probably Burns's nature—his genius being piqued to activity by the contradictions of his fortune.

Suppose that some generous rich man had accidentally become acquainted with the lad Robert Burns, and grieving to think that such a mind should continue boorish among boors, had, much to his credit, taken him from the plough, sent him to College, and given him a complete education. Doubtless he would have excelled; for he was "quick to learn, and wise to know." But he would not have been SCOTLAND'S BURNS. The prodigy had not been exhibited of a poet of the first order in that rank of life. It is an instructive spectacle for the world, and let the instruction take effect by the continuance of the spectacle for its natural period. Let the poet work at that calling which is clearly meant for him—he is "native and endued to the element" of his situation—there is no appearance of his being alien or strange to it—he professes proudly that his ambition is to illustrate the very life he exists in—his happiest moments are in doing so—and he is reconciled to it by its being thus blended with the happiest exertions of his genius. We must look at his lot as a whole—from beginning to end—and so looked at it was not unsuitable—but the reverse; for as to its later afflictions they were not such as of necessity belonged to it, were partly owing to himself, partly to others, partly to evil influences peculiar not to his calling, but to the times.

If Burns had not been prematurely cut off, it is not to be doubted that he would have got promotion either by favor, or in the ordinary course; and had that happened, he would not have had much cause for complaint, nor would he have complained that like other men he had to wait events, and reach competence or affluence by the usual routine. He would, like other men, have then looked back on his narrow circumstances, and their privations, as conditions which, from the first, he knew

must precede preferment, and would no more have thought such hardships peculiar to his lot, than the first lieutenant of a frigate, the rough work he had had to perform, on small pay, and no delicate mess between decks, when he was a mate, though then perhaps a better seaman than the Commodore.

With these sentiments we do not expect that all who honor this Memoir with a perusal will entirely sympathize ; but imperfect as it is, we have no fear of its favorable reception by our friends, on the score of its pervading spirit. As to the poor creatures who purse up their unmeaning mouths, trying too without the necessary feature to sport the supercilious—and instead of speaking daggers, pip pins against the "Scotch"—they are just the very vermin who used to bite Burns, and one would pause for a moment in the middle of a sentence to impale a dozen of them on one's pen, if they happened to crawl across one's paper. But our Southern brethren—the noble English—who may not share these sentiments of ours—will think "more in sorrow than in anger" of Burns's fate, and for his sake will be loth to blame his mother land. They must think with a sigh of their own Bloomfield, and Clare ! Our Burns indeed was a greater far ; but they will call to mind the calamities of their men of genius, of discoverers in science, who advanced the wealth of nations, and died of hunger—of musicians who taught the souls of the people in angelic harmonies to commerce with heaven, and dropt unhonored into a hole of earth—of painters who glorified the very sunrise and sunset, and were buried in places for a long time obscure as the shadow of oblivion—and surpassing glory and shame of all—

"OF MIGHTY POETS IN THEIR MISERY DEAD."

We never think of the closing years of Burns's life, without feeling what not many seem to have felt, that much more of their unhappiness is to be attributed to the most mistaken notion he had unfortunately taken up, of there being something degrading in genius *in writing for money*, than perhaps to all other causes put together, certainly far more than to his professional calling, however unsuitable that may have been to a poet. By

persisting in a line of conduct pursuant to that persuasion, he kept himself in perpetual poverty ; and though it is not possible to blame him severely for such a fault, originating as it did in the gerrorous enthusiasm of the poetical character, a most serious fault it was, and its consequences were most lamentable. So far from being an extravagant man, in the common concerns of life he observed a proper parsimony ; and they must have been careless readers indeed, both of his prose and verse, who have taxed him with lending the colors of his genius to set off with a false lustre that profligate profuseness, habitual only with the selfish, and irreconcileable with any steadfast domestic virtue.

“ To catch dame Fortune’s golden smile,
Assiduous wait upon her ;
And gather gear by every wile
That’s justified by honor ;
Not for to hide it in a hedge,
Nor for a train attendant ;
BUT FOR THE GLORIOUS PRIVILEGE
OF BEING INDEPENDENT.”

Such was the advice he gave to a young friend in 1786, and in 1789, in a letter to Robert Ainslie, he says, “ Your poets, spend-thrifts, and other fools of that kidney pretend, forsooth, to crack their jokes on prudence—but ’tis a squalid vagabond glorying in his rags. Still, imprudence respecting money matters is much more pardonable than imprudence respecting character. I have no objections to prefer prodigality to avarice, in some few instances : but I appeal to your own observation if you have not often met with the same disingenuousness, the same hollow-hearted insincerity, and disintegrative depravity of principle, in the hackneyed victims of profusion, as in the unfeeling children of parsimony.” Similar sentiments will recur to every one familiar with his writings—all through them till the very end. His very songs are full of them—many of the best impressively preaching in sweetest numbers industry and thrift. So was he privileged to indulge in poetic transports—to picture, without reproach, the genial hours in the poor man’s life, alas ! but too unfrequent, and therefore to be enjoyed with a lawful revelry,

at once obedient to the iron-tongued knell that commands it to cease. So was he justified in scorning the close-fisted niggardliness that forces up one finger after another, as if *chirted* by a screw, and then shows to the pauper a palm with a doit. “Take care of the pennies, and the pounds will take care of themselves,” is an excellent maxim ; but we do not look for illustrations of it in poetry ; perhaps it is too importunate in prose. Full-grown moralists and political economists, eager to promote the virtue and the wealth of nations, can study it scientifically in Adam Smith—but the boy must have two buttons to his fob and a clasp, who would seek for it in Robert Burns. The bias of poor human nature seems to lean sufficiently to self, and to require something to balance it the other way ; what more effectual than the touch of a poet’s finger ? We cannot relieve every wretch we meet—*yet* if we “take care of the pennies,” how shall the hunger that beseeches us on the street get a bap ? If we let “the pounds take care of themselves,” how shall we answer to God at the great day of judgment—remembering how often we had let “unpitied want retire to die”—” the white-faced widow pass us unrelieved, in faded weeds that seemed as if they were woven of dust ?

In his poetry, Burns taught love and pity ; in his life he practised them. Nay, though seldom free from the pressure of poverty, so ignorant was he of the science of duty, that to the very last he was a notorious giver of alms. Many an impostor must have preyed on his meal-girnel at Ellisland ; perhaps the old sick sailor was one, who nevertheless repaid several weeks’ board and lodging with a cutter one-foot keel, and six pound burthen, which young Bobby Burns—such is this uncertain word —*grat* one Sabbath to see a total wreck far off in the mid-eddies of the mighty Nith. But the idiot who got his dole from the poet’s own hand, as often as he chose to come churming up the Vennel, he was no impostor, and though he had lost his wits, retained a sense of gratitude, and returned a blessing in such phrase as they can articulate “whose lives are hidden with God.”

How happened it, then, that such a man was so neglectful of his wife and family, as to let their hearts often ache while he

was in possession of a productive genius that might so easily have procured for them all the necessaries, and conveniences, and some even of the luxuries of life? By the Edinburgh edition of his poems, and the copyright to Creech, he had made a little fortune, and we know how well he used it. From the day of his final settlement with that money-making, story-telling, magisterial bibliopole, who rejoiced for many years in the name of Provost—to the week before his death, his poetry, and that too sorely against his will, brought him in—*ten pounds!* Had he thereby annually earned fifty—what happy faces at that fireside! how different that household! comparatively how calm that troubled life!

All the poetry, by which he was suddenly made so famous, had been written, as you know, without the thought of *money* having so much as flitted across his mind. The delight of embodying in verse the visions of his inspired fancy—of awakening the sympathies of the few rustic auditors in his own narrow circle, whose hearts he well knew throbbed with the same emotions that are dearest to humanity all over the wide world—that had been at first all in all to him—the young poet exulting in his power and in the proof of his power—till as the assurance of his soul in its divine endowment waxed stronger and stronger he beheld his country's muse with the holly-wreath in her hand, and bowed his head to receive the everlasting halo. “And take thou *this* she smiling said”—that smile was as a seal set on his fame for ever—and “in the old clay biggin” he was happy to the full measure of his large heart's desire. His poems grew up like flowers before his tread—they came out like singing-birds from the thickets—they grew like clouds on the sky—there they were in their beauty, and he hardly knew they were his own—so quiet had been their creation, so like the process of nature among her material loveliness, in the season of spring when life is again evolved out of death, and the renovation seems as if it would never more need the Almighty hand, in that immortal union of earth and heaven.

You will not think these words extravagant, if you have well considered the *ecstasy* in which the spirit of the poet was lifted up above the carking cares of his toilsome life, by the conscious-

ness of the genius that had been given him to idealize it. "My heart rejoiced in Nature's joy" he says, remembering the beautiful happiness of a summer day reposing on the woods ; and from that line we know how intimate had been his communion with Nature long before he had indited to her a single lay of love. And still as he wandered among her secret haunts he thought of her poets—with a fearful hope that he might one day be of the number—and most of all of Ferguson and Ramsay, because they belonged to Scotland, were Scottish in all their looks, and all their language, in the very habits of their bodies, and in the very frames of their souls—humble names now indeed compared with his own, but to the end sacred in his generous and grateful bosom ; for at "The Farmer's Ingle" his imagination had kindled into the "Cottar's Saturday Night;" in the "Gentle Shepherd" he had seen many a happy sight that had furnished the matter, we had almost said inspired the emotion, of some of his sweetest and most gladsome songs. In his own every-day working world he walked as a man contented with the pleasure arising in his mere human heart ; but that world the poet could purify and elevate at will into a celestial sphere, still lightened by Scottish skies, still melodious with Scottish streams, still inhabited by Scottish life—sweet as reality—dear as truth—yet visionary as fiction's dream, and felt to be in part the work of his own creation. Proudly, therefore, on that poorest soil the peasant poet bade speed the plough—proudly he stooped his shoulders to the sack of corn, itself a cart-load—proudly he swept the scythe that swathed the flowery herbage—proudly he grasped the sickle—but tenderly too he "turned the weeder clips aside, and spared the symbol dear."

Well was he entitled to say to his friend Aiken, in the dedicatory stanza of the Cottar's Saturday Night :

" My loved, my honored, most respected friend !
No *mercenary* bard his homage pays ;
With honest pride I scorn each selfish end,
My dearest meed, a friend's esteem and praise."

All that he hoped to make by the Kilmarnock edition was twenty pounds to carry him to the West Indies, heedless of the yellow

fever. At Edinburgh fortune hand in hand with fame descended on the bard in a shower of gold ; but he had not courted "the smiles of the fickle goddess," and she soon wheeled away with scornful laughter out of his sight for ever and a day. His poetry had been composed in the fields, with not a plack in the pocket of the poet ; and we verily believe that he thought no more of the circulating medium than did the poor mouse in whose fate he saw his own—but more unfortunate !

" Still thou art blest compared wi' *me* !
The *present* only toucheth thee :
But och ! I backward cast my e'e
On prospects drear !
An' forward, though I canna see,
I guess and *fear*."

At Ellisland his colley bore on his collar, " Robert Burns, poet ;" and on his removal to Dumfries, we know that he indulged the dream of devoting all his leisure time to poetry—a dream how imperfectly realized ! Poor Johnson, an old Edinburgh friend, begged in his poverty help to his " Museum," and Thomson, not even an old Edinburgh acquaintance, in his pride—no ignoble pride—solicited it for his " Collection ;" and fired by the thought of embellishing the body of Scottish song, he spurned the gentle and guarded proffer of remuneration in money, and set to work as he had done of yore in the spirit of love, assured from sweet experience that inspiration was its own reward. Sell a song ! as well sell a wild-flower plucked from a spring-bank at sun-rise. The one pervading feeling does indeed expand itself in a song, like a wild flower in the breath and dew of morning, which before was but a bud, and we are touched with a new sense of beauty at the full disclosure. As a song should always be simple, the flower we liken it to is the lily or the violet. The leaves of the lily are white, but it is not a monotonous whiteness—the leaves of the violet, sometimes " dim as the lids of Cytherea's eyes"—for Shakspeare has said so—are, when well and happy, blue as her eyes themselves, while they looked languishingly on Adonis. Yet the exquisite color seems of different shades in its rarest richness ; and even so as

lily or violet shiftingly the same, should be a song in its simplicity, variously tinged with fine distinctions of the one color of that pervading feeling—now brighter, now dimmer, as open and shut the valve of that mystery, the heart. Sell a song ! No—no—said Burns—“ You shall have hundreds for nothing—and we shall all sail down the stream of time together, now to merry, and now to sorrowful music, and the dwellers on its banks, as we glide by, shall bless us by name, and call us of the Immortals.”

It was in this way that Burns was beguiled by the remembrance of the inspirations of his youthful prime, into the belief that it would be absolutely sordid to write songs for money ; and thus he continued for years to enrich others by the choicest products of his genius, himself remaining all the while, alas ! too poor. The richest man in the town was not more regular in the settlement of his accounts, but sometimes on Saturday nights he had not wherewithal to pay the expenses of the week's subsistence, and had to borrow a pound note. He was more ready to lend one, and you know he died out of debt. But his family suffered privations it is sad to think of—though to be sure the children were too young to grieve, and soon fell asleep, and Jean was a cheerful creature, strong at heart, and proud of her famous Robin, the Poet of Scotland, whom the whole world admired, but she alone loved, and so far from ever upbraiding him, welcomed him at all hours to her arms and to her heart. It is all very fine talking about the delight he enjoyed in the composition of his matchless lyrics, and the restoration of all those faded and broken songs of other ages, burnished by a few touches of his hand to surpassing beauty ; but what we lament is, that with the Poet it was not “ No song, no supper,” but “ No supper for any song”—that with an infatuation singular even in the history of the poetic tribe, he adhered to what he had resolved, in the face of distress which, had he chosen it, he could have changed into comfort, and by merely doing so as all others did, have secured a competency to his wife and children. Infatuation ! It is too strong a word—therefore substitute some other weaker in expression of blame—nay, let it be—if so you will—some gentle term of praise and of pity ; for in this most

selfish world, 'tis so rare to be of self utterly regardless, that the scorn of self may for a moment be thought a virtue, even when indulged to the loss of the tenderly beloved. Yet the great natural affections have their duties superior over all others between man and man ; and he who sets them aside, in the generosity or the joy of genius, must frequently feel that by such dereliction he has become amenable to conscience, and in hours when enthusiasm is tamed by reflection, cannot escape the tooth of remorse.

How it would have kindled all his highest powers, to have felt assured that by their exercise in the Poet's own vocation he could not only keep want from his door "with stern alarum banishing sweet sleep," but clothe, lodge, and board "the wife and weans," as sumptuously as if he had been an absolute supervisor ! In one article alone was he a man of expensive habits—it was quite a craze with him to have his Jean dressed *genteelly* —for she had a fine figure, and as she stepped along the green, you might have taken the matron for a maid, so light her foot, so animated her bearing, as if care had never imposed any burden on her not ungraceful shoulders heavier than the milk-pail she had learned at Mossiel to bear on her head. 'Tis said that she was the first in her rank at Dumfries to sport a gingham gown, and Burns's taste in ribands had been instructed by the rainbow. To such a pitch of extravagance had he carried his craze that when dressed for church, Mrs. Burns, it was conjectured, could not have had on her person much less than the value of two pounds sterling money, and the boys, from their dress and demeanor, you might have mistaken for a gentleman's sons. Then he resolved they should have the best education going ; and the Hon. the Provost, the Bailies, and Town Council, he petitioned thus : "The literary taste and liberal spirit of your good town have so ably filled the various departments of your schools, as to make it a very great object for a parent to have his children educated in them ; still, to me a stranger, with my large family, and very stinted income, to give my young ones that education I wish, at the high school fees which a stranger pays, will bear hard upon me. Some years ago your good town did me the honor of making me an honorary burgess, will you then

allow me to request, that this mark of distinction may extend so far as to put me on a footing of a real freeman in the schools?" Had not "his income been so stinted," we know how he would have spent it.

Then the world—the gracious and grateful world—"wondered and of wondering found no end," how and why it happened that Burns was publishing no more poems. What was he about? Had his genius deserted him? Was the vein wrought out? of fine ore indeed, but thin, and now there was but rubbish. His contributions to Johnson were not much known, and but some six of his songs in the first half part of Thomson appeared during his life. But what if he had himself given to the world, through the channel of the regular trade, and for his own be-hoof, in Parts, or all at once, THOSE TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTY SONGS—new and old—original and restored—with all those disquisitions, annotations, and ever so many more, themselves often very poetry indeed—what would the world have felt, thought, said, and done then? She would at least not have believed that the author of the Cottar's Saturday Night was—a drunkard. And what would Burns have felt, thought, said, and done then? He would have felt that he was turning his divine gift to a sacred purpose—he would have thought well of himself, and in that just appreciation there would have been peace—he would have said thousands on thousands of high and noble sentiments in discourses and in letters, with an untroubled voice and a steady pen, the sweet persuasive eloquence of the happy—he would have done greater things than it had before entered into his heart to conceive—his drama of the Bruce would have come forth magnificent from an imagination elevated by the joy that was in his heart—his Scottish Georgics would have written themselves, and would have been pure Virgilian—Tale upon Tale, each a day's work or a week's, would have taken the shine out of Tam o' Shanter.

And here it is incumbent on us to record our sentiments regarding Mr. Thomson's conduct towards Burns in his worst extremity, which has not only been assailed by "anonymous scribblers," whom perhaps he may rightly regard with contempt; but as he says in his letter to our esteemed friend, the ingenious

and energetic Robert Chambers, to "his great surprise, by some writers who might have been expected to possess sufficient judgment to see the matter in its true light."

In the "melancholy letter received through Mrs. Hyslop," as Mr. Thomson well calls it, dated April, Burns writes, "Alas! my dear Thomson, I fear it will be some time before I tune my lyre again. 'By Babel streams I have sat and wept,' almost ever since I wrote you last (in February, when he thanked Mr. Thomson for 'a handsome elegant present to Mrs. B——,' we believe a worsted shawl). I have only known existence by the pressure of the heavy hand of sickness, and have counted time but by the repercussions of pain. Rheumatism, cold, and fever, have formed to me a terrible combination. I close my eyes in misery, and open them without hope." In his answer to that letter, dated 4th May, Mr. Thomson writes, "I need not tell you, my good sir, what concern your last gave me, and how much I sympathize in your sufferings. But do not, I beseech you, give yourself up to despondency, nor speak the language of despair. The vigor of your constitution, I trust, will soon set you on your feet again; and *then it is to be hoped you will see the wisdom of taking due care of a life so valuable to your family, to your friends, and to the world.* Trusting that your next will bring agreeable accounts of your convalescence, and good spirits, I remain with sincere regard, yours." This is kind as it should be; and the advice given to Burns is good, though perhaps, under the circumstances, it might just as well have been spared. In a subsequent letter without date, Burns writes, "I have great hopes that the genial influence of the approaching summer will set me to rights, but as yet I cannot boast of returning health. I have now reason to believe that my complaint is a flying gout; a sad business." Then comes that most heart-rending letter, in which the dying Burns, in terror of a jail, implores the loan of five pounds—and the well-known reply. "Ever since I received your melancholy letter by Mrs. Hyslop, I have been ruminating in what manner I could endeavor to alleviate your sufferings," and so on. Shorter rumination than of *three months* might, one would think, have sufficed to mature some plan for the alleviation of such sufferings, and human ingenuity has been more severely

taxed than it would have been in devising means to carry it into effect. The recollection of a letter written *three years before*, when the Poet was in high health and spirits, needed not to have stayed his hand. “The fear of offending your independent spirit,”* seems a bugbear indeed. “With great pleasure I enclose a draft for the *very sum I had proposed sending!*! Would I were CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER but for one day for your sake !!!”

Josiah Walker, however, to whom Mr. Thomson gratefully refers, says, “a few days before Burns expired, he applied to Mr. Thomson for a loan of £5, in a note which showed the irritable and distracted state of his mind, and his commendable judgment instantly remitted the precise sum, foreseeing that had he, at that moment, presumed to exceed that request, he would have exasperated the irritation and resentment of the haughty invalid, and done him more injury, by agitating his passions, than could be repaired by administering more largely to his wants.” Haughty invalid! Alas! he was humble enough now. “After all my boasted independence, *stern necessity compels me to implore you for five pounds!*” Call not that a pang of pride. It is the outcry of a wounded spirit shrinking from the last worst arrow of affliction. In one breath he implores succor and forgiveness from the man to whom he had been a benefactor. “*Forgive me* this earnestness—but the horrors of a jail have made me half distracted. *FORGIVE ME! FORGIVE ME!*” He asks no gift—he but begs to borrow—and trusts to the genius God had given him for ability to repay the loan; nay, he encloses his *last song*, “Fairest Maid on Devon’s banks,” as in part payment! But oh! save Robert Burns from dying in prison. What hauteur! And with so “haughty an invalid,” how shall a musical brother deal, so as not “to exasperate his irritation and resentment,” and do him “more injury by agitating his passions, than could be repaired by administering more largely to his wants? *More largely!* Faugh! faugh! Foreseeing that he who was half-mad at the horrors of a jail, would go wholly mad were ten pounds sent to him instead of five, which was all “the haughty invalid” had implored, “with commendable judgment,” according to Josiah Walker’s philosophy of human life, George Thom-

son sent “the precise sum!” And supposing it had gone into the pocket of the merciless haberdasher, on what did Josiah Walker think would “the haughty invalid” have subsisted *then*—how paid for lodging without board by the melancholy Solway-side?

Mr. Thomson’s champion proceeds to say—“Burns had all the unmanageable pride of Samuel Johnson, *and if the latter threw away with indignation the new shoes which had been placed at his chamber door, secretly and collectively by his companions,* the former would have been still more ready to resent any pecuniary donation which a single individual, after his peremptory prohibition, should avowedly have dared to insult him with.” In Boswell we read—“Mr. Bateman’s lectures were so excellent that Johnson used to come and get them at second-hand from Taylor, till his poverty being so extreme, that his shoes were worn out, and his feet appeared through them, he saw that his humiliating condition was perceived by the Christ-Church men, and he came no more. He was too proud to accept of money, *and somebody having set a pair of new shoes at his door, he threw them away with indignation.*” Hall, Master of Pembroke, in a note on this passage, expresses strong doubts of Johnson’s poverty at college having been extreme; and Croker, with his usual accuracy, says, “authoritatively and circumstantially as this story is told, there is good reason for disbelieving it altogether. Taylor was admitted Commoner of Christ-Church, June 27, 1720; Johnson left Oxford six months before.” Suppose it true. Had Johnson found the impudent cub in the act of depositing the eleemosynary shoes, he infallibly would have knocked him down with fist or folio as clean as he afterwards did Osborne. But Mr. Thomson was no such cub, nor did he stand relatively to Burns in the same position as such cub to Johnson. He owed Burns much money—though Burns would not allow himself to think so; and had he expostulated, with open heart and hand, with the Bard on his obstinate—he might have kindly said foolish and worse than foolish disregard not only of his own interest, but of the comfort of his wife and family—had he gone to Dumfries for the sole purpose—who can doubt that “his justice and generosity” would have been crowned with success?

Who but Josiah Walker could have said, that Burns would have *then* thought himself insulted? Resent a “pecuniary donation” indeed! What is a donation? Johnson tells us in the words of South; “After donation there is an absolute change and alienation made of the property of the thing given; which, being alienated, a man has no more to do with it than with a thing bought with another’s money.” It was Burns who made a donation to Thomson of a hundred and twenty songs.

All mankind must agree with Mr. Lockhart when he says—“Why Burns, who was of opinion, when he wrote his letter to Mr. Carfrae, that ‘no profits were more honorable than those of the labors of a man of genius,’ and whose own notions of independence had sustained no shock in the receipt of hundreds of pounds from Creech, should have spurned the suggestion of pecuniary recompense from Mr. Thomson, it is no easy matter to explain; nor do I profess to understand why Mr. Thomson took so little pains to argue the matter *in limine* with the poet, and convince him that the time which he himself considered as fairly entitled to be paid for by a common bookseller, ought of right to be valued and acknowledged by the editor and proprietor of a book containing both songs and music.” We are not so much blaming the backwardness of Thomson in the matter of the songs, as we are exposing the *blather* of Walker in the story of the shoes. Yet something there is in the nature of the whole transaction that nobody can stomach. We think we have in a great measure explained how it happened that Burns “spurned the suggestion of pecuniary recompense;” and bearing our remarks in mind, look for a moment at the circumstances of the case. Mr. Thomson, in his first letter, September, 1792, says, “*Profit is quite a secondary consideration with us*, and we are resolved to spare neither pains nor expense on the publication.” “We shall esteem your poetical assistance a particular favor, besides paying *any reasonable price* you shall please demand for it.” And would Robert Burns condescend to receive money for his contributions to a work in honor of Scotland, undertaken by men with whom “profit was quite a secondary consideration?” Impossible. In July, 1793, when Burns had been for nine months enthusiastically co-operating in a great national work, and had

proved that he would carry it on to a triumphant close, Mr. Thomson writes—"I cannot express how much I am obliged to you for the exquisite new songs you are sending me; but thanks, my friend, are a poor return for what you have done. As I shall be benefited by the publication, you must suffer me to inclose a small mark of my gratitude, and to repeat it afterwards *when I find it convenient*. Do not return it—for BY HEAVEN if you do, *our correspondence is at an end.*" A bank-note for five pounds! "In the name of the prophet—FIGS!" Burns, with a proper feeling, retained the trifle, but forbade the repetition of it; and everybody must see, at a glance, that such a man could not have done otherwise—for it would have been most degrading indeed had he shown himself ready to accept a five pound note when it might happen to suit the convenience of an Editor. His domicile was not in Grub-street.

Mr. Walker, still further to soothe Mr. Thomson's feelings, sent him an extract from a letter of Lord Woodhouselee's—"I am glad that you have embraced the occasion which lay in your way of doing full justice to Mr. George Thomson, who I agree with you in thinking, was most harshly and illiberally treated by an anonymous dull calumniator. I have always regarded Mr. Thomson as a man of great worth and most respectable character; and I have every reason to believe that poor Burns felt *himself as much indebted to his good counsels and active friendship as a man, as the public is sensible he was to his good taste and judgment as a critic.*" Mr. Thomson, in now giving, for the first time, this extract to the public, says, "Of the unbiassed opinion of such a highly respectable gentleman and accomplished writer as Lord Woodhouselee, I certainly feel not a little proud. It is of itself more than sufficient to silence the calumnies by which I have been assailed, first anonymously, and afterwards, to my great surprise, by some writers who might have been expected to possess sufficient judgment to see the matter in its true light." He has reason to feel proud of his Lordship's good opinion, and on the ground of his private character he deserved it. But the assertions contained in the extract have no bearing whatever on the question, and they are entirely untrue. Lord Woodhouselee could have had no authority for believing, "that

poor Burns felt himself indebted to Mr. Thomson's good counsels and active friendship as a man." Mr. Thomson, a person of no influence or account, had it not in his power to exert any "active friendship" for Burns—and as to "good counsels," it is not to be believed for a moment, that a modest man like him, who had never interchanged a word with Burns, would have presumed to become his Mentor. This is putting him forward in the high character of Burns's benefactor, not only in his worldly concerns, but in his moral well-being; a position which of himself he never could have dreamt of claiming, and from which he must, on a moment's consideration, with pain inexpressible recoil. Neither is "the public sensible" that Burns was "indebted to his good taste and judgment as a critic." The public kindly regard Mr. Thomson, and think that in his correspondence with Burns he makes a respectable figure. But Burns repudiated most of his critical strictures; and the worthy Clerk of the Board of Trustees does indeed frequently fall into sad mistakes, concerning alike poetry, music, and painting. Lord Woodhouselee's "unbiased opinion," then, so far from being of itself "sufficient to silence the calumnies of ignorant assailants, &c.," is not worth a straw.

Mr. Thomson, in his five pound letter, asks—"Pray, my good sir, is it not possible for you to *muster a volume of poetry?*" Why, with the assistance of Messrs. Johnson and Thomson, it would have been possible; and then Burns might have called in his "Jolly Beggars." "If too much trouble to you," continues Mr. Thomson, "in the present state of your health, some literary friend might be found here who would select and arrange your manuscripts, and take upon him the *task of editor*. In the meantime, it could be advertised to be published by subscription. Do not shun this mode of obtaining the value of your labor; remember Pope published the *Iliad* by subscription." Why, had not Burns published his own poems by subscription! All this seems the strangest mockery ever heard of; yet there can be no doubt that it was written not only with a serious face, but with a kind heart. But George Thomson at that time was almost as poor a man as Robert Burns. Allan Cunningham, a man of genius and virtue, in his interesting *Life of Burns*, has in

his characteristic straight-forward style put the matter—in as far as regards the money remittance—in its true light, and all Mr. Thomson's friends should be thankful to him—“Thomson instantly complied with the request of Burns ; he borrowed a five-pound note from Cunningham (a draft), and sent it saying, he had made up his mind to inclose the identical sum the poet had asked for, when he received his letter. For this he has been sharply censured ; and his defence is, that he was afraid of sending more, lest he should offend the pride of the poet, who was uncommonly sensitive in pecuniary matters. A better defence is Thomson's own poverty ; only one volume of his splendid work was then published ; his outlay had been beyond his means, and very small sums of money had come in to cover his large expenditure. Had he been richer, his defence would have been a difficult matter. When Burns made the stipulation, his hopes were high, and the dread of hunger or of the jail was far from his thoughts ; he imagined that it became genius to refuse money in a work of national importance. But his situation grew gloomier as he wrote ; he had lost nearly his all in Ellisland, and was obliged to borrow small sums, which he found a difficulty in repaying. That he was in poor circumstances was well known to the world ; and had money been at Thomson's disposal, a way might have been found of doing the poet good by stealth : he sent five pounds, because he could not send ten, and it would have saved him from some sarcastic remarks, and some pangs of heart, had he said so at once.”

Mr. Thomson has attempted a defence of himself about once every seven years, but has always made the matter worse, by putting it on wrong grounds. In a letter to that other Arcadian, Josiah Walker, he says—many years ago—“Now, the fact is, that notwithstanding the united labors of all the men of genius who have enriched my Collection, I am not even *yet compensated for the precious time consumed by me in poring over musty volumes, and in corresponding with every amateur and poet, by whose means I expected to make any valuable addition to our national music and song* ;—for the exertion and money it cost me to obtain accompaniments from the greatest masters of harmony in Vienna ; and for the sums paid to engravers, printers, and others.”

Let us separate the items of this account. The money laid out by him must stand by itself—and for that outlay, he had then been compensated by the profits of the sale of the Collection. Those profits, we do not doubt, had been much exaggerated by public opinion, but they had then been considerable and have since been great. Our undivided attention has therefore to be turned to “his precious time consumed,” and to its inadequate compensation. And the first question that naturally occurs to every reader to ask himself is—“in what sense are we to take the terms ‘time,’ ‘precious,’ and ‘consumed?’” Inasmuch as “time” is only another word for life, it is equally “precious” to all men. Take it then to mean leisure hours, in which men seek for relaxation and enjoyment. Mr. Thomson tells us that he was, from early youth, an enthusiast in music and in poetry ; and it puzzles us to conceive what he means by talking of “his precious time being consumed” in such studies. To an enthusiast, a “musty volume” is a treasure beyond the wealth of Ind—to pore over “musty volumes” sweet as to gaze on melting eyes—he hugs them to his heart. They are their own exceeding great reward—and we cannot listen to any claim for pecuniary compensation. Then who ever heard, before or since, of an enthusiast in poetry avowing before the world, that he had not been sufficiently compensated in money, “for the precious time consumed by him in corresponding with Poets ?” Poets are proverbially an irritable race ; still there is something about them that makes them very engaging—and we cannot bring ourselves to think that George Thomson’s “precious time consumed” in corresponding with Sir Walter Scott, Thomas Campbell, Joanna Baillie, and the Ettrick Shepherd, deserved “compensation.” As to amateurs, we mournfully grant they are burthensome ; yet even that burthen may uncomplainingly be borne by an Editor who “expects by their means to make any valuable addition to our national music and song ;” and it cannot be denied, that the creatures have often good ears, and turn off tolerable verses. Finally, if by “precious” he means valuable, in a Politico Economical sense, we do not see how Mr. Thomson’s time could have been consumed more productively to himself ; nor indeed how he could have made any money at all by a different employment of

it. In every sense, therefore, in which the words are construed, they are equally absurd ; and all who read them are forced to think of one whose “ precious time was indeed consumed ”—to his fatal loss—the too generous, the self-devoted Burns—but for whose “ uncompensated exertions,” “The Melodies of Scotland” would have been to the Editor a ruinous concern, in place of one which for nearly half a century must have been yielding him a greater annual income than the Poet would have enjoyed had he been even a Supervisor.

Mr. Thomson has further put forth in his letter to Robert Chalmers, and not now for the first time, this most injudicious defence. “ Had I been a selfish or avaricious man, I had a fair opportunity, upon the death of the poet, to put money in my pocket ; for I might then have published, for my own behoof, all the beautiful lyrics he had written for me, the original manuscripts of which were in my possession. But instead of doing this, I was no sooner informed that the friends of the poet’s family had come to a resolution to collect his works, and to publish them, for the benefit of the family, and that they thought it of importance to include my MSS. as being likely, from their number, their novelty, and their beauty, to prove an attraction to subscribers, than I felt it my duty to put them at once in possession of all the songs, and of the correspondence between the poet and myself ; and accordingly, through Mr. John Syme of Ryedale, I transmitted the whole to Dr. Currie, who had been prevailed on, immensely to the advantage of Mrs. Burns and her children, to take on himself the task of editor. For this surrendering the manuscripts, I received both verbally and in writing, the warm thanks of the trustees for the family—Mr. John Syme and Mr. Gilbert Burns—who considered what I had done as a fair return for the poet’s generosity of conduct to me.” Of course he retained the exclusive right of publishing the songs with the music in his Collection. Now, what if he had refused to surrender the manuscripts ? The whole world would have accused him of robbing the widow and orphan, and he would have been hooted out of Scotland. George Thomson, rather than have done so, would have suffered himself to be pressed to death between two mill-stones ; and yet he not only instances his having “ surrendered the MSS. as a

proof of the calumnious nature of the abuse with which he had been assailed by anonymous scribblers, but is proud of the thanks of "the trustees of the family, who considered what I had done as a *fair return* for the poet's generosity of conduct to me." Setting aside, then, "the calumnies of anonymous scribblers," with one and all of which we are unacquainted, we have shown that Josiah Walker, in his foolish remarks on this affair, whereby he outraged the common feelings of humanity, left his friend just where he stood before—that Lord Woodhouselee knew nothing whatever about the matter, and in his good nature has made assertions absurdly untrue—that Mr. Thomson's own defence of himself is in all respects an utter failure, and mainly depends on the supposition of a case unexampled in a Christian land—that Lockhart with unerring finger has indicated where the fault lay—and that Cuninghame has accounted for it by a reason that with candid judges must serve to reduce it to one of a very pardonable kind ; the avowal of which from the first, would have saved a worthy man from some unjust obloquy, and at least as much undeserved commendation—the truth being now apparent to all, that "his poverty, not his will, consented" to secure on the terms of non-payment, a hundred and twenty songs from the greatest lyrical poet of his country, who during the years he ~~was~~ thus lavishing away the effusions of his matchless genius, without fee or reward, was in a state bordering on destitution, and as the pen dropt from his hand, did not leave sufficient to defray the expenses of a decent funeral.

We come now to contemplate his dying days ; and mournful as the contemplation is, the close of many an illustrious life has been far more distressing, involved in far thicker darkness, and far heavier storms. From youth he had been visited—we shall not say haunted—by presentiments of an early death ; he knew well that the profound melancholy that often settled down upon his whole being, suddenly changing day into night, arose from his organization ;—and it seems as if the finest still bordered on disease—disease in his case perhaps hereditary—for his father was often sadder than even "the toil-worn cottar" needed to be, and looked like a man subject to inward trouble. His character was somewhat stern ; and we can believe that in its austerity he

found a safeguard against passion, that nevertheless may shake the life it cannot wreck. But the son wanted the father's firmness ; and in his veins there coursed more impetuous blood. The very fire of genius consumed him, coming and going in fitful flashes ; his genius itself may almost be called a passion, so vehement was it, and so turbulent—though it had its scenes of blissful quietude ; his heart too seldom suffered itself to be at rest ; many a fever travelled through his veins ; his calmest nights were liable to be broken in upon by the worst of dreams—waking dreams from which there is no deliverance in a sudden start—of which the misery is felt to be no delusion—which are not dispelled by the morning light, but accompany their victim as he walks out into the day, and among the dew, and surrounded as he is with the beauty of rejoicing nature, tempt him to curse the day he was born.

Yet let us not call the life of Burns unhappy—nor at its close shut our eyes to the manifold blessings showered by heaven on the Poet's lot. Many of the mental sufferings that helped most to wear him out, originated in his own restless nature—"by prudent, cautious, self-control" he might have subdued some and tempered others—better regulation was within his power—and, like all men, he paid the penalty of neglect of duty, or of its violation. But what loss is hardest to bear ? The loss of the beloved. All other wounds are slight to those of the affections. Let Fortune do her worst—so that Death be merciful. Burns went to his own grave without having been commanded to look down into another's where all was buried. "I have lately drunk deep of the cup of affliction. The autumn robbed me of my only daughter and darling child, and that at a distance too, and so rapidly, as to put it out of my power to pay the last duties to her." The flower withered, and he wept—but his four pretty boys were soon dancing again in their glee—their mother's heart was soon composed again to cheerfulness—and her face without a shadow. Anxiety for their sakes did indeed keep preying on his heart ;—but what would that anxiety have seemed to him, had he been called upon to look back upon it in anguish *because they were not?* Happiness too great for this earth ! If in a

dream for one short hour restored, that would have been like an hour in heaven.

Burns had not been well for a twelvemonth ; and though nobody seems even then to have thought him dying, on the return of spring, which brought him no strength, he knew that his days were numbered. Intense thought, so it be calm, is salutary to life. It is emotion that shortens our days by hurrying life's pulsations—till the heart can no more, and runs down like a disordered time-piece. We said nobody seems to have thought him dying ;—yet after the event everybody, on looking back on it, remembered seeing death in his face. It is when thinking of those many months of decline and decay, that we feel pity and sorrow for his fate, and that along with them other emotions will arise, without our well knowing towards whom, or by what name they should be called, but partaking of indignation, and shame, and reproach, as if some great wrong had been done, and might have been rectified before death came to close the account. Not without blame somewhere could such a man have been so neglected—so forgotten—so left alone to sicken and die.

“ Oh, Scotia ! my dear, my native soil,
For whom my warmest wish to heaven is sent !
Long may thy hardy sons of rustic toil
Be blest with health, and peace, and sweet content !”

No son of Scotland did ever regard her with more filial affection—did ever in strains so sweet sing of the scenes “that make her loved at home, revered abroad”—and yet his mother stretched not out her hand to sustain—when it was too late to save—her own Poet as he was sinking into an untimely grave. But the dying man complained not of her ingratitude—he loved her too well to the last to suspect her of such sin—there was nothing for him to forgive—and he knew that he would have a place for ever in her memory. Her rulers were occupied with great concerns—in which *all thoughts of self were merged !* and therefore well might they forget her Poet, who was but a cottar’s son and a gauger. In such forgetfulness they were what other rulers have been, and will be,—and Coleridge lived to know that the great ones of his own land could be as heartless in his own

case as the “Scotch nobility” in that of Burns, for whose brows his youthful genius wove a wreath of scorn. “The rapt one of the godlike forehead, the heaven-eyed creature sleeps in earth”—but who among them cared for the long self-seclusion of the white-headed sage—for his sick bed, or his grave?

Turn we then from the Impersonation named Scotland—from her rulers—from her nobility and gentry—to the personal friends of Burns. Could they have served him in his straits? And how? If they could, then were they bound to do so by a stricter obligation than lay upon any other party; and if they had the will as well as the power, 'twould have been easy to find a way. The duties of friendship are plain, simple, sacred—and to perform them is delightful; yet, so far as we can see, they were not performed here—if they were, let us have the names of the beneficent who visited Burns every other day during the months disease had deprived him of all power to follow his calling? Who insisted on helping to keep the family in comfort till his strength might be restored? For example, to pay his house rent for a year? Mr. Syme, of Ryedale, told Dr. Currie, that Burns had “many firm friends in Dumfries,” who would not have suffered the haberdasher to put him into jail, and that his were the fears of a man in delirium. Did not those “firm friends” know that he was of necessity very poor? And did any one of them offer to lend him thirty shillings to pay for his three weeks’ lodgings at the Brow? He was not in delirium—till within two days of his death. Small sums he had occasionally borrowed and repaid; but from people as poor as himself; such as kind Craig, the schoolmaster, to whom, at his death, he owed a pound—never from the more opulent townfolk or the gentry in the neighborhood, of not one of whom is it recorded that he or she accommodated the dying Poet with a loan sufficient to pay for a week’s porridge and milk. Let us have no more disgusting palaver about his pride. His heart would have melted within him at any act of considerate friendship done to his family; and so far from feeling that by accepting it he had become a pauper, he would have recognized in the doer of it a brother, and taken him into his heart. And had he not in all the earth, one single such Friend? His brother Gilbert

was struggling with severe difficulties at Mossgiel, and was then unable to assist him ; and his excellent cousin at Montrose had enough to do to maintain his own family ; but as soon as he knew how matters stood, he showed that the true Burns' blood was in his heart, and after the Poet's death, was as kind as man could be to his widow and children.

What had come over Mrs. Dunlop that she should have seemed to have forgotten or forsaken him ? “ *These many months you have been two packets in my debt*—what sin of ignorance I have committed against so highly valued a friend I am utterly at a loss to guess ! Alas ! Madam, ill can I afford, at this time, to be deprived of any of the small remnant of my pleasures. * * * I had scarcely begun to recover from that shock (the death of his little daughter), when I became myself the victim of a most severe rheumatic fever, and long the die spun doubtful ; until, after many weeks of a sick bed, it seems to have turned up life, and I am beginning to crawl across my room, and once, indeed, have been before my own door in the street.” No answer came ; and three months after he wrote from the Brow, “ Madam—I have written you so often without receiving any answer, that I would not trouble you again but for the circumstances in which I am. An illness which has long hung about me, in all probability will speedily send me beyond that *bourne whence no traveller returns*. Your friendship, with which for many years you honored me, was a friendship dearest to my soul. Your conversation, and especially your correspondence, were at once highly entertaining and instructive. With what pleasure did I use to break up the seal ! The remembrance yet adds one pulse more to my poor palpitating heart. Farewell. R. B.” Currie says, “ Burns had the pleasure of receiving a satisfactory explanation of his friend's silence, and an assurance of the continuance of her friendship to his widow and children ; an assurance that has been amply fulfilled. That “satisfactory explanation” should have been given to the world—it should be given yet—for without it such incomprehensible silence must continue to seem cruel ; and it is due to the memory of one whom Burns loved

and honored to the last, to vindicate on her part the faithfulness of the friendship which preserves her name.

Maria Riddel, a lady of fine talents and accomplishments, and though somewhat capricious in the consciousness of her mental and personal attractions, yet of most amiable disposition, and of an affectionate and tender heart, was so little aware of the condition of the Poet, whose genius she could so well appreciate, that only a few weeks before his death, when he could hardly crawl, he had by letter to decline acceding to her “desire that he would go to the birth-day assembly, on the 4th June, to *show his loyalty!*” Alas! he was fast “wearin’ awa to the land o’ the leal;” and after the lapse of a few weeks, that lady gay, herself in poor health, and saddened out of such vanities by sincerest sorrow, was struck with his appearance on entering the room. “The stamp of death was imprinted on his features. He seemed already touching the brink of eternity. His first salutation was—‘Well, Madam, have you any commands for the next world?’” The best men have indulged in such sallies, on the brink of the grave. Nor has the utterance of words like these, as life’s taper was flickering in the socket, been felt to denote a mood of levity unbecoming a creature about to go to his account. On the contrary, there is something very affecting in the application of such formulas of speech as had been of familiar use all his days, on his passage through the shadow of time, now that his being is about to be liberated into the light of eternity, where our mortal language is heard not, and spirit communicates with spirit through organs not made of clay, having dropped the body like a garment.

In that interview, the last recorded, and it is recorded well—pity so much should have been suppressed—“he spoke of his death without any of the ostentation of philosophy, but with firmness as well as feeling, as an event likely to happen very soon, and which gave him concern chiefly from leaving his poor children so young and unprotected, and his wife in so interesting a situation, in hourly expectation of lying in of a fifth.” Yet, during the whole afternoon, he was cheerful, even gay, and disposed for pleasantry; such is the power of the human voice and the human eye over the human heart, almost to the re-

suscitation of drowned hope, when they are both suffused with affection, when tones are as tender as tears, yet can better hide the pity that ever and anon will be gushing from the lids of grief. He expressed deep contrition for having been betrayed by his inferior nature and vicious sympathy with the dissolute, into impurities in verse, which he knew were floating about among people of loose lives, and might on his death be collected to the hurt of his moral character. Never had Burns been “hired minstrel of voluptuous blandishment,” nor by such unguarded freedom of speech had he ever sought to corrupt; but emulating the ribald wit and coarse humor of some of the worst old ballants current among the lower orders of the people, of whom the moral and religious are often tolerant of indecencies to a strange degree, he felt that he had sinned against his genius. A miscreant, aware of his poverty, had made him an offer of fifty pounds for a collection, which he repelled with the horror of remorse. Such things can hardly be said to have existence; the polluted perishes, or shovelled aside from the socialities of mirthful men, are nearly obsolete, except among those whose thoughtlessness is so great as to be sinful, among whom the distinction ceases between the weak and the wicked. From such painful thoughts he turned to his poetry, that had every year been becoming dearer and dearer to the people, and he had comfort in the assurance that it was pure and good; and he wished to live a little longer that he might mend his Songs, for through them he felt he would survive in the hearts of the dwellers in cottage-homes all over Scotland; and in the fond imagination of his heart Scotland to him was all the world.

“He spoke of his death without any of the ostentation of philosophy,” and perhaps without any reference to religion; for dying men often keep their profoundest thoughts to themselves, except in the chamber in which they believe they are about to have the last look of the objects of their earthly love, and there they give them utterance in a few words of hope and trust. While yet walking about in the open air, and visiting their friends, they continue to converse about the things of this life in language so full of animation, that you might think, but for something about their eyes, that they are unconscious of their doom;

and so at times they are ; for the customary pleasure of social intercourse does not desert them ; the sight of others well and happy beguiles them of the mournful knowledge that their own term has nearly expired, and in that oblivion they are cheerful as the persons seem to be who for their sakes assume a smiling aspect in spite of struggling tears. So was it with Burns at the Brow. But he had his Bible with him in his lodgings, and he read it almost continually—often when seated on a bank, from which he had difficulty in rising without assistance, for his weakness was extreme, and in his emaciation he was like a ghost. The fire of his eye was not dimmed—indeed fever had lighted it up beyond even its natural brightness ; and though his voice, once so various, was now hollow, his discourse was still that of a Poet. To the last he loved the sunshine, the grass, and the flowers ; to the last he had a kind look and word for the passers-by, who all knew it was Burns. Laboring men, on their way from work, would step aside to the two or three houses called the Brow, to know if there was any hope of his life ; and it is not to be doubted that devout people remembered him, who had written the Cottar's Saturday Night, in their prayers. His sceptical doubts no longer troubled him ; they had never been more than shadows ; and he had at last the faith of a confiding Christian. We are not even to suppose that his heart was always disquieted within him because of the helpless condition of his widow and orphans. That must have been indeed with him a dismal day on which he wrote three letters about them so full of anguish ; but to give vent to grief in passionate outcries usually assuages it, and tranquillity sometimes steals upon despair. His belief that he was so sunk in debt was a delusion—not of delirium, but of the fear that is in love. And comfort must have come to him in the conviction that his country would not suffer the family of her Poet to be in want. As long as he had health they were happy, though poor ; as long as he was alive, they were not utterly destitute. That on his death they would be paupers, was a dread that could have had no abiding place in a heart that knew how it had beat for Scotland, and in the power of genius had poured out all its love on her fields and her people. His heart was pierced with the same wounds that extort lamentation.

tations from the death-beds of ordinary men, thinking of what will become of wife and children ; but like the pouring of oil upon them by some gracious hand, must have been the frequent recurrence of the belief—"On my death people will pity them, and care for them for my name's sake." Some little matter of money he knew he should leave behind him—the two hundred pounds he had lent to his brother ; and it sorely grieved him to think that Gilbert might be ruined by having to return it. What brotherly affection was there ! They had not met for a good many years ; but personal intercourse was not required to sustain their friendship. At the Brow often must the dying Poet have remembered Mossiel.

On the near approach of death he returned to his own house, in a spring-cart ; and having left it at the foot of the street, he could just totter up to his door. The last words his hand had strength to put on paper were to his wife's father, and were written probably within an hour of his return home. "My dear Sir—Do, for heaven's sake, send Mrs. Armour here immediately. My wife is hourly expected to be put to bed ! Good God ! what a situation for her to be in, poor girl, without a friend ! I returned from sea-bathing quarters to-day ; and my medical friends would almost persuade me that I am better ; but I think and feel that my strength is so gone, that the disorder will prove fatal to me. Your son-in-law, R. B." That is not the letter of a man in delirium ; nor was the letter written a few days before from the Brow to "my dearest love." But next day he was delirious, and the day after too, though on being spoken to he roused himself into collected and composed thought, and was, ever and anon, for a few minutes himself—Robert Burns. In his delirium there was nothing to distress the listeners and the lookers on ; words were heard that to them had no meaning ; mistakings made by the parting spirit among its language now in confusion breaking up ; and sometimes words of trifling import about trifling things—about incidents and events unnoticed in their happening, but now strangely cared for in their final repassing before the closed eyes just ere the dissolution of the dream of a dream. Nor did his death-bed want for affectionate and faithful service. The few who were

privileged to tend it did so tenderly and reverently—now by the side of the sick wife, and now by that of the dying husband. Maxwell, a kind physician, came often to gaze in sadness where no skill could relieve. Findlater, supervisor of excise, sat by his bed-side the night before he died ; and Jessie Lewars, daughter and sister of a gauger, was his sick nurse. Had he been her own father, she could not have done her duty with a more perfect devotion of her whole filial heart—and her name will never die, “here eternized on earth” by the genius of the Poet who, for all her Christian kindness to him and his, had long cherished toward her the tenderest gratitude. His children had been taken care of by friends, and were led in to be near him, now that his hour was come. His wife in her own bed knew it, as soon as her Robert was taken from her ; and the great Poet of the Scottish people, who had been born “in the auld clay biggin” on a stormy winter night, died in an humble tenement on a bright summer morning, among humble folk, who composed his body, and according to custom strewed around it flowers brought from their own gardens.

Great was the grief of the people for their Poet’s death. They felt that they had lost their greatest man ; and it is no exaggeration to say that Scotland was saddened on the day of his funeral. It is seldom that tears are shed even close to the grave beyond the inner circle that narrows round it ; but that day there were tears in the eyes of many far off at their work, and that night there was silence in thousands of cottages that had so often heard his songs—how sweeter far than any other, whether mournfully or merrily to old accordant melodies they won their way into the heart ! The people had always loved him ; they best understood his character, its strength and its weakness. Not among them at any time had it been harshly judged, and they allowed him now the sacred privileges of the grave. The religious have done so ever since, pitying more than condemning, nor afraid to praise ; for they have confessed to themselves, that had there been a window in their breasts as there was in that of Burns, worse sights might have been seen—a darker revelation. His country charged herself with the care of them he had loved so well, and the spirit in which she

performed her duty is the best proof that her neglect—if neglect at any time there were—of her Poet's well-being had not been wilful, but is to be numbered with those omissions incident to all human affairs, more to be lamented than blamed, and if not to be forgotten, surely to be forgiven, even by the nations who may have nothing to reproach themselves with in their conduct towards any of their great poets. England, “the foremost land of all this world,” was not slack to join in her sister's sorrow, and proved the sincerity of her own, not by barren words, but fruitful deeds, and best of all by fervent love and admiration of the poetry that had opened up so many delightful views into the character and condition of our “bold peasantry, their country's pride,” worthy compatriots with her own, and exhibiting in different Manners the same national Virtues.

No doubt wonder at a prodigy had mingled in many minds with admiration of the ploughman's poetry ; and when they of their wondering found an end, such persons began to talk with abated enthusiasm of his genius and increased severity of his character, so that during intervals of silence, an under current of detraction was frequently heard brawling with an ugly noise. But the main stream soon ran itself clear ; and Burns has no abusers now out of the superannuated list ; out of it—better still—he has no patrons. In our youth we have heard him spoken of by the big-wigs with exceeding condescension ; now the tallest men know that to see his features rightly they must look up. Shakspeare, Spencer, and Milton, are unapproachable ; but the present era is the most splendid in the history of our poetry—in England beginning with Cowper, in Scotland with Burns. Original and racy, each in his own land is yet unexcelled ; immovably they both keep their places—their inheritance is sure. Changes wide and deep, for better and for worse, have been long going on in town and country. There is now among the people more education—more knowledge than at any former day. Their worldly condition is more prosperous, while there is still among them a deep religious spirit. By that spirit alone can they be secured in the good, and saved from the evil of knowledge ; but the spirit of poetry is akin to that of religion, and the union of the two is in no human composition more

powerful than in "the Cottar's Saturday Night." "Let who may have the making of the laws give me the making of the ballads of a people," is a profound saying ; and the truth it somewhat paradoxically expresses is in much as applicable to a cultivated and intellectual as to a rude and imaginative age. From our old traditional ballads we know what was dearest to the hearts and souls of the people. How much deeper must be the power over them of the poems and songs of such a man as Burns, of himself alone superior in genius to all those nameless minstrels, and of a nobler nature ; and yet more endeared to them by pity for the sorrows that clouded the close of his life.

THE END.







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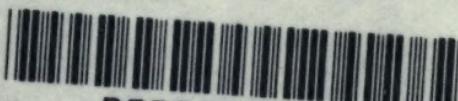
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